

This electronic thesis or dissertation has been downloaded from the King's Research Portal at <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/>



**Dialogue and dialectic in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Occitan and old French courtly lyric and narrative**

Barker, Camilla

*Awarding institution:*  
King's College London

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

**END USER LICENCE AGREEMENT**



**Unless another licence is stated on the immediately following page** this work is licensed

under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

licence. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You are free to copy, distribute and transmit the work

Under the following conditions:

- Attribution: You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- Non Commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works - You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you receive permission from the author. Your fair dealings and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

**Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [librarypure@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:librarypure@kcl.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

This electronic theses or dissertation has been downloaded from the King's Research Portal at <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/>



**Title:** Dialogue and dialectic in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Occitan and old French courtly lyric and narrative

**Author:** Camilla Barker

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

#### END USER LICENSE AGREEMENT



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

You are free to:

- Share: to copy, distribute and transmit the work

Under the following conditions:

- Attribution: You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- Non Commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works - You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you receive permission from the author. Your fair dealings and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

#### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [librarypure@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:librarypure@kcl.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

**Camilla Barker**

**PhD, French (School of Arts and Humanities)**

**Dialogue and dialectic in twelfth- and  
thirteenth-century Occitan and Old French  
courtly lyric and narrative**

## **Contents**

Abstract	P. 3
Introduction	P. 4
Chapter 1: Old French & Occitan: Intertextuality and Cultural Divides	P.22
Chapter 2: Silence and Secrecy	P. 91
Chapter 3: Monologue as Dialogue	P. 156
Chapter 4: Women's Desire	P. 242
Conclusion	P. 314
Bibliography	P. 321

## **Abstract**

This thesis considers how dialectic, dialogue and debate contribute to the construction of the courtly subject in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Old French and Occitan lyric and narrative. It considers how debate and dialogue are informed by dialectic, which acts as a structural and thematic frame and gives courtly debate its distinctive oppositional tone. I argue that dialectic underpins debate lyrics; dialogues within narrative texts; and monologues (within lyrics and narratives) which break down into clear internal dialogue, or which use formal structures which are suggestive of dialogue.

Chapter one stands as an introduction to the substantial tradition of debate both in Occitan and in Northern French. Chapter two considers a major theme in courtly literature, silence and secrecy, in the context of debate. Chapter three addresses dialogic forms within monologue, whether in single-voiced lyric poems or in monologues delivered by characters in narrative texts. Chapter four examines women's desire, within the framework of dialogue, asking how dialogue shapes and constructs the feminine voice. Each chapter considers a range of courtly lyrics that are not in dialogue form, but which use the formal properties of dialogue, in addition to contemporary verse narratives.

Research questions include what dialogue can tell us about the construction of the speaking voice in courtly literature; how dialogue constructs the feminine voice; and how dialogue inscribes cultural difference.

## Introduction

This thesis explores the way dialectic, dialogue and debate inform and construct the poetic persona in Old French and Occitan courtly love lyric and narratives. My focus is the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which saw an explosion of courtly literature in these languages. I will consider how debate works in the context of dialectic, which acts as a structural and thematic frame and gives courtly debate its distinctive oppositional form and content. I will show how dialectic structures debate lyrics; dialogues within narrative texts; and monologues (within lyrics and narratives) which evolve into clear internal dialogue, or which use formal structures which are suggestive of dialogue.

There are around 160 debate lyrics in Occitan (known as *tensos*) and 170 in Old French (known as *jeux-partis*) respectively.<sup>1</sup> These two corpuses allow me to consider how the linguistic traditions overlap and develop in opposition to each other, thematically and structurally. While the lyric corpus is central to this thesis, I also consider debate within narrative texts, ranging from Chrétien de Troyes' Old French Arthurian romances (which date from the mid to late twelfth century) to the Occitan romance *Flamenca* (which dates from the late thirteenth century). This allows me to compare the use of dialogue within the lyrics with that seen in plot-

---

<sup>1</sup> Gally defines the *jeu-parti* as 'une énonciation: un débat unique situé dans un moment précis avec des partenaires connus...il est la représentation directe ou différée d'un dialogue en vers entre deux partenaires qui s'interpellent par leurs noms avant de nommer à leur tour dans deux envois des juges chargés de dire le droit d'amour' in 'Jehan Bretel, poète et mécène', pp. 127-28. Harvey and Paterson follow the *Leys d'Amor's* terms, defining a *tenso* as 'an altercation or debate in which each [interlocutor] maintains and pleads in favour of some proposition or action', and a *partimen* as 'an issue which has two opposite sides, which is given to another person who is to choose and defend the side he wishes to opt for'. *The Troubadour Tensos and Partimens*, p. xix.

driven narratives. Finally, I include debate, whether overt or suggested, within single-voiced lyrics and in monologues within narratives.

My approach to dialogue encompasses both structure and content, with two chapters focusing on the former and two on the latter. Chapter One considers debate between two linguistic and cultural traditions and the impact of dialogue structure on the presentation of these traditions. Chapter Two examines the theme of silence and secrecy, which is at the centre of all courtly literature but which takes on a particular pertinence when more than one poetic voice or character is implicated in a debate. Chapter Three considers dialogue within the frame of the monologue, and encompasses both internal and suggested dialogue; finally, Chapter Four looks at feminine voices, asking how dialogue contributes to the construction of gender.

Before setting out the corpus and my research questions in more detail, it may be helpful to sketch the social and educational context in which courtly literature flourished in what we now call northern and southern France. This will be followed by an analysis of dialectic – how it is defined, and how it can be used as a framework for questions of debate within courtly literature.

While urban centres were beginning to emerge in Occitania by the twelfth century, the social setting for the composition of troubadour lyric was predominantly aristocratic court centres; aristocrats were both composers and patrons.<sup>2</sup> The

---

<sup>2</sup> Paterson describes the principal courts in Occitania, stating that 'Early troubadours such as Cercamon and Marcabru remained attached to the court of Guilhem X of Aquitaine until his death...The late twelfth century, however, seems to have been a good time for itinerant

troubadours, from what little we know, were drawn from aristocratic and non-aristocratic backgrounds; their songs often highlight feudal relationships, which probably reflects the social structure in which they were composed. Non-aristocratic troubadours were educated men dependent on patronage; Meneghetti has argued that, up until about the mid-twelfth century, the circulation of troubadour lyrics was limited to a handful of Occitanian courts, suggesting a specific social backdrop for Occitan lyric production at this time.<sup>3</sup> The importance of patronage is also seen in northern France – Chrétien de Troyes, for example, dedicated his *Lancelot* to his patron Marie de Champagne.<sup>4</sup> The association of some Old French writers with aristocratic court centres is reflected in their texts' awareness of feudal and chivalric systems. It is likely that courtly literature began in Occitania and moved northwards; trade routes and the movement of the Occitanian aristocracy in the person of Eleanor of Aquitaine (who married Henry II of England in 1154) goes some way toward explaining this geographical shift.

The northern trading town of Arras enjoyed a thriving literary tradition in the early Middle Ages: *jeux-partis* were central to this tradition. This was an urban environment different from the feudal court centres of Occitania. As Butterfield sets out, Arras was split into two – *la Cité* and *la Ville*. *La Cité* was governed by the bishop (on behalf of the King of France), and contained the Cathedral; *la Ville*

---

*joglars* on a bed-and-breakfast tour of the Carcassès, or the trip from Auvergne to Provence, Toulouse, the Sabarthès, Castillon and Mataplana'. *The World of the Troubadours*, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> Meneghetti states that 'Se ne deve dunque più generalmente dedurre che, almeno fino all'altezza del 1160-65, la lirica cortese è scarsamente diffusa, è ancora un affare di pochi, forse di pochissimi, e, soprattutto, che manca ancora di canali stabili di trasmissione'. *Il Pubblico dei Trovatori*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Benton describes the prologue to *Lancelot* as follows: 'The introduction alone establishes Marie's importance as a literary patron; it clearly informs us that Chrétien was in personal communication with the countess, that she encouraged him to write, and that she suggested the story which Chrétien developed'. 'The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center', p. 562.



contained the Abbey, and was governed by the Comte d'Artois, setting up a divide between the clergy and the aristocracy.<sup>5</sup> The cathedral and the abbey each boasted a school, and Symes has estimated that between them they turned out around two hundred students per year, destined to service the church and the town's administrative needs.<sup>6</sup>

As a trading town whose merchants dealt in money, wool, and cloth, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the development of a class of literate Artesian merchants and clerks who enjoyed the composition and performance of vernacular poetry and plays. Gally describes the social mix who enjoyed the city's literary output as bringing together 'non seulement des bourgeois de la ville mais aussi des étrangers, clerks, chevaliers, chanoines, tous poètes ou connaisseurs en poésie lyrique'.<sup>7</sup> Medieval Arras boasted two literary organisations, the *puy* and the *confrérie*. The latter was a guild, whose activities included not just its annual literary festival, but training and social support for its members (who had to be *bourgeois*) and their families. There is far less information available about the *puys*, although Armstrong and Kay describe them as 'a distinctively collective and urban phenomenon...they were organized by *confréries*, mutual and/or professional associations with a pronounced charitable and devotional character'.<sup>8</sup> What is clear is that from the twelfth century there were two literary groups who celebrated Arras' literary culture in annual festivals, uniting those who composed poetry. The *trouvères*' social mix 'ranges right across the structure of the whole town...there is enough evidence to suggest that literary activities in Arras attracted the highest

---

<sup>5</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> Symes, *A Common Stage*, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Gally, 'Jehan Bretel', p. 126.

<sup>8</sup> Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, p. 40.

level of social interest as well as the involvement of a substantial professional class of poets'.<sup>9</sup> While there were aristocratic trouvères, the majority seem to have been drawn from what the modern reader would call the emerging *bourgeoisie*, educated men who were clerics, administrators, or merchants, all of whom contributed to what Butterfield has labelled the 'culturally ambiguous and fluid' character of medieval Arras.<sup>10</sup>

The twelfth century saw not just the economic expansion which enabled towns like Arras to develop, but also a remarkable increase in philosophical and theological exploration. Vance describes the changes thus:

The extraordinary dynamism of secular vernacular letters at that time corresponded to mutations in the social order that were no less radical: for instance, the rise of urbanism, the division of the labor force, the monetarization of social relationships, the articulation of a new class consciousness, the exploitation of writing and accounting as new instruments of political power, and the emergence of international commerce.<sup>11</sup>

Education, at the centre of which were the liberal arts and the art of debate, was key to this 'twelfth-century renaissance'.<sup>12</sup> The explosion of interest in abstract ideas went hand in hand with a growing number of schools, which produced a cadre

---

<sup>9</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 151.

<sup>11</sup> Vance, *From Topic to Tale*, p. xx.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Swanson's *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* for a detailed exposition on the twelfth century as a century of unprecedented intellectual activity in the Latin west.

of educated young men destined for the church or administration.<sup>13</sup> This cohort of literate young men (women were included in this social movement only in exceptional cases, as I set out below) would revolutionise western thought. As Stock argues, 'Before the year 1000...there existed both oral and written traditions in medieval culture. But throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries an important transformation began to take place. The written did not simply supersede the oral, although that happened in large measure: a new type of inter-dependence also arose between the two. In other words, oral discourse effectively began to function within a universe of communications governed by texts'.<sup>14</sup> Courtly literature spans this cultural change, with the oral tradition captured in manuscripts mostly produced from the thirteenth century onwards.

There were two principal educational routes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: schools attached to a cathedral or a monastery, or aristocratic households. Girls or women were educated in both settings, but they remained the exception.<sup>15</sup> By the twelfth century schools, many of which would later coalesce into universities, were emerging in urban and monastic centres or cathedrals. In the first half of the twelfth century Paris boasted the schools of Notre Dame, of St. Victor, of the Petit Pont and of the Mont Ste Geneviève.<sup>16</sup> Other northern French schools of note included Orléans, Rheims, Laon, and Chartres.<sup>17</sup> Outside France, Bologna boasted a law school, and by the thirteenth century the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and

---

<sup>13</sup> Swanson describes the cathedral schools as centres which produced cohorts of students qualified as administrators, pp. 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ferrante states that 'There is no question that many women of the nobility were educated during the Middle Ages, some to a high degree', but does not attempt to quantify this. 'The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy', p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> See Rijk's article, 'Some New Evidence on Twelfth Century Logic: Alberic and the School of Mont Ste Geneviève (Montani)', p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> See Swanson, pp. 12-39 for a detailed analysis of educational structures in the twelfth century.

Padua had been established. As Baldwin suggests, 'The proliferation of schools clearly benefitted from the urban revival in western Europe...Among the scores of urban schools which dotted the map of western Europe, each city became known for an academic speciality. Early in the twelfth century, Chartres retained a reputation for the liberal arts, which Orléans later shared, but preeminence in this subject was undoubtedly enjoyed by Paris throughout the Middle Ages'.<sup>18</sup> By the late twelfth century, contemporary writers such as Alexander Nequam and Chrétien de Troyes were able to describe the competing attractions of educational centres.<sup>19</sup> The schools attracted peripatetic masters keen to establish a reputation for themselves; the most famous of these is perhaps Peter Abelard, whose work on dialectic built on that of Aristotle and Boethius. The schools produced literate men who would feed the twelfth-century renaissance, transforming legal systems, church administration, and the economy, and in some cases transferring their skills in dispute and debate to vernacular poetry. Morris describes the transformation as follows: 'A further change took place in...the creation of a large class of men with an advanced education acquired in the rising cathedral schools and universities. The availability of this group made possible a managerial revolution both in Church and State. The kingdoms of the eleventh century had possessed little by way of a trained civil service, but by 1200 most secular governments commanded the services of skilled lawyers and highly literate clerks, who could be employed in administration, the keeping of records, and diplomacy'.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Baldwin, *The Scholastic Culture of the Middle Ages, 1000-1300*, p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the Prologue to Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès*, which, in lines 30-44, refers to France (by which he would have meant Paris) as the centre of *clergie*; Alexander Nequam's *De naturis rerum* also discusses the various centres of learning; see Hunt's 'Aristotle, Dialectic, and Courtly Literature', pp. 95-96.

<sup>20</sup> Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050 – 1200*, p. 46.

What, then, would a young man have been taught about the arts in such a school? The seven liberal arts, and grammar and logic in particular, had formed the basis of the curriculum probably since the eighth century.<sup>21</sup> Marenbon argues that ‘the quadrivium was frequently neglected, and rhetoric did not receive the attention given to grammar and logic’.<sup>22</sup> Teaching was delivered in three principal ways: *disputatio*, *lectio*, and *praedicatio*: dispute, reading (although *lectio* designates “both...’teaching’ and...’reading’”) and preaching.<sup>23</sup> *Disputatio* is the use of debate as a teaching tool, and was one of the Middle Ages’ primary teaching methods.<sup>24</sup> *Disputatio* can be described as dialectic in action, and was particularly pertinent in the teaching of law.<sup>25</sup> Legal influence can be seen in the forensic language used in many courtly debates, which self-consciously deploy legal terminology, giving the lyrics the feel of a courtroom. It is perhaps unsurprising that courtly debate echoes the dialectical structure of the medieval judicial process (a debate followed by a judgment); as Bloch points out, ‘The rise of an inquisitory court system, in which argumentation was practiced in the place of battle, along with the increasingly dialectical patterns of Latin and vernacular poetry, attest to the tremendous importance in all areas of cultural life – legal, intellectual, and literary – of what remains the verbal form of violence *par excellence*: the debate’.<sup>26</sup> Having given a

---

<sup>21</sup> Marenbon cites Alcuin (ca 730-804) as the first scholar to discuss the seven liberal arts. See *Aristotelian Logic*, pp. 172-73.

<sup>22</sup> Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150-1350)*, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Hamesse cites John of Salisbury on the etymology of the Latin verb *legere*, and Robert of Melun, who specifies that a reader (*lector*) ‘tries to understand a text while he reads it’, as opposed to one who simply ‘reads aloud a text written by someone else’. ‘The Scholastic Model of Reading’, pp. 105 and 108.

<sup>24</sup> Makdisi describes the *disputatio* thus: ‘the disputation...by the time of John of Salisbury (d. 1180) had become a distinct form and function of teaching, alongside the lecture and the academic sermon (the *lectio* and the *praedicatio*)’. “The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education: An Inquiry into Its Origins in Law and Theology”, p. 647.

<sup>25</sup> Teaching law began ‘with the reading of authoritative texts which raised questions to which solutions were reached by disputation’. Baldwin, p. 75.

<sup>26</sup> Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law*, p. 164.

brief overview of education in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, I shall move on to dialectic before setting out my research questions in more detail.

Dialectic can be defined as the art of oppositional argument. Dialectic (or logic, as it was often known in the Middle Ages) is not a twelfth- and thirteenth-century invention. It emerged in Plato's *Symposium*. Plato (c. 429-347 BC) was the first philosopher to articulate the concept of dialectic and use it in a technical sense. Developed from rhetoric, it originally referred to discussion, but by the twelfth century had evolved into a sophisticated treatment of oppositions and argumentation.<sup>27</sup> Aristotle (c. 384-322 BC) and Cicero (c. 106-43 BC) explored dialectic in their *Categoriae* and *De interpretatione* respectively. Boethius (d. c 526 AD) was the next thinker to take up dialectic. He wrote treatises on the three works cited above, and his own texts, the most well-known of which is the *De topicis differentiis*.<sup>28</sup> Boethius's work dominated logic at the start of the twelfth century, sitting alongside the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, described by Murphy as 'a complete textbook of rhetoric'.<sup>29</sup> Boethius's conception of dialectic was 'to do with the discovery of arguments that are readily believable and that can be used to compel agreement from an opponent in disputation'.<sup>30</sup>

These works and their content (which included the philosophy of language, as well as dialectic) were, by the twelfth century, referred to as the *logica vetus*, or old

---

<sup>27</sup> See Wagner, 'The Seven Classical Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship', p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Boethius's other texts on logic are the *Introductio ad syllogismos categoricos*; *De syllogismis categoricis*; *De syllogismis hypotheticis*; and *De divisione*.

<sup>29</sup> Minio-Paluello, for example, states that 'Boethius' translation of *Top[ics]* is contained in about 250 manuscripts and a dozen printed editions. 'The Text of Aristotle's *Topics* and *Elenchi*: The Latin Tradition', p. 110; Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Stump, 'Dialectic', p. 127.

logic.<sup>31</sup> The *logica vetus* was the central corpus of texts which informed the twelfth-century study of dialectic; by this time, dialectic or logic was an acknowledged part of the seven liberal arts.<sup>32</sup> By the mid twelfth-century the *logica nova* had overtaken the *logica vetus*, and was in circulation amongst scholars across western Europe by 1132.<sup>33</sup> The texts of the *logica nova* come from Aristotle's *Organon* and added hugely to the understanding of dialectic.<sup>34</sup> As Hunt argues, 'The scope and depth of dialectic were immeasurably enhanced by the introduction of the more advanced texts of the *Organon* which constituted the Logica Nova'.<sup>35</sup> Thus at the time that vernacular courtly literature emerged, a set of treatises which expound complex ideas about dialectic were part of the educational process: as Kelly puts it, 'the medieval arts of poetry and prose draw on learned and scholastic traditions of ancient, especially Roman, origin. These traditions linked poetics to one or more of the liberal arts, especially grammar and rhetoric'.<sup>36</sup>

Of these traditions, Aristotle was perhaps the most influential single figure: he defined contraries, and the way in which opposition works when developing an argument (in the *Topica*, books five and eight); Hunt calls this work 'a new textbook of modes of dialectical reasoning, together with commonplaces of argument which

---

<sup>31</sup> The *logica nova* or new logic, which I shall not address here, emerged in the twelfth century, based on the Aristotelian treatises the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, the *Topics*, and the *Sophistici elenchi*. Eleanore Stump describes the *logica nova* as 'characterized by its interest in fallacies and sophistical reasoning'. Stump, p. 128.

<sup>32</sup> The seven liberal arts are split into the Trivium (Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic) and the Quadrivium (Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music).

<sup>33</sup> Hunt states that Adam of Petit Pont used Aristotle's *Topica* in his *Ars disserendi* in 1132; the earliest manuscripts containing a Latin version of the *Topica* date from the mid-twelfth century (Bologna, Biblioteca universitaria MS 4228 and Oxford, Trinity College MS 47). See 'Aristotle, Dialectic', p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> These texts are Aristotle's *Analytica Priora*; *Analytica Posteriora*, the *Topica*; and the *Sophistici Elenchi*.

<sup>35</sup> Hunt, 'Aristotle, Dialectic', p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance*, p. 32.

might aid the composition of argumentative speeches'.<sup>37</sup> By the second quarter of the twelfth century, scholars such as Abelard were using the *Logica Nova* and Aristotle's work on dialectic, and were using this oppositional structure to 'seek the truth' in their own logical and theological works. Abelard wrote several works on dialectic and oppositions; perhaps the most pertinent to dialectic are the *Sic et Non* and the *Dialectica*.<sup>38</sup> The former became a seminal work. Written c. 1120, it sets out 158 contradictory theological authorities and became a blueprint for the interrogation of a subject via dialectic.

In summary, then, dialectic and dispute permeated education, and through education, law and theology. The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* traces dialectic from Socrates onwards; its definition, which I shall follow, is:

In the Socratic method dialectic is the process of eliciting the truth by means of questions aimed at opening out what is already implicitly known, or at exposing the contradictions and muddles of an opponent's position. In the middle dialogues of Plato, however, it becomes the total process of enlightenment, whereby the philosopher is educated so as to achieve knowledge of the supreme good...For Aristotle, dialectic is any rational inference based on probable premises.<sup>39</sup>

Thus a generation of literate men, educated within a system which broadly qualified them for the church or for the law, turned their hand to vernacular poetry. As we

---

<sup>37</sup> Hunt, 'Aristotle, Dialectic', p. 98.

<sup>38</sup> Marenbon dates Abelard's *Dialectica* to before 1121, and possibly before 1117. See *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>39</sup> Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 104.



have seen, dispute and debate permeated education. Unsurprisingly, the structure of debate in lyric and narrative echoes this. The importance of dialectic and dispute when considering debate in courtly literature is twofold: first, the proportion of courtly lyrics and narratives which use the debate form; secondly, the pervasive influence of contradiction. Roughly five percent of the extant troubadour lyric canon is composed of debate lyrics (as compared to around forty-four percent of the trobairitz lyric canon), and just under nine percent of the trouvère canon. These figures do not attempt to assess the use of dialogic or oppositional structure within single-voiced lyrics, nor the prevalence of dialogue or dialogic structure within narratives. It is impossible to read courtly literature without being struck by the constant creation of antithetical positions, whether actions or emotions. As Gaunt points out, this binary approach can be seen from the earliest extant courtly lyrics, those of Guilhem IX.<sup>40</sup> Kay has also commented on the contradictions which sit at the heart of courtly literature:

Courtly texts exhibit a particular pleasure in contradiction. The rhetoric of the lyric favours figures of speech involving paired contraries, according to which the lover is both joyful and downcast, exalted and abject. In courtly romances there are likewise many passages which elaborately explore oppositions. Both genres also exhibit the widespread use of contradiction as a figure of thought.<sup>41</sup>

I suggest that dialectic, which Kay identifies as the theory which informs the practice of contradiction within courtly texts, can be seen not just in contraries but in debate,

---

<sup>40</sup> Gaunt, *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature*, pp. 205-7.

<sup>41</sup> Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, p. 2.

and that considering debate through the framework of dialectic is a fruitful way of navigating courtly literature's preoccupation with the debate form. Hunt argues:

It is possible to discern the distinctive role of dialectic in three different aspects of courtly literature. First, the very concept of "courtly love" and the experience which it embodies appear to be of a dialectical nature and susceptible of dialectical treatment...Second, there is the construction of poetic works themselves on the dialectical model of oppositions and correspondences...Finally, there is the prominent part played by ratiocination itself in the frequent debates found in the romances.<sup>42</sup>

Although this summary refers to romance narratives, it can usefully be applied to lyrics. In terms of structure and content, the elements which Hunt identifies can be seen in lyric poetry, whose form (and to a large extent its content) is based on the oppositions of dialectic, a basis which is particularly stark in the binary structure of the debate lyrics.

Chapter One, 'Old French and Occitan: Intertextuality and Cultural Divides' gives an overview of the cultural backdrop against which courtly literature emerged. It introduces the texts and gives an insight into the societies which produced and enjoyed courtly debate. It explores courtly literature's emergence in Occitania before moving northward to Arras and England, a movement possible thanks to trade routes, aristocratic and royal marriages, and travel for educational purposes. I ask how the texts reflect differing social milieux, and whether the binary form of the debate lyric – in effect, dialectic in action - contributes to the articulation of cultural

---

<sup>42</sup> Hunt, 'Aristotle, Dialectic', p. 108.

difference by forcing the interlocutors' positions to polarise. In other words, I ask to what extent structure influences content when it comes to cultural difference. Three bilingual *tensos* illustrate the use of differing languages as cultural markers, and this point is also highlighted by comparison of the same theme – two lovers - in Occitan and in Old French *tensos*. I also examine how narrative texts present cultural differences through dialogue, using *Jaufré*, *Flamenca*, the *Lai de l'ombre*, the *Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, and *Yvain*.

The cultural difference between the societies which produced Occitan and Old French courtly literature can be summarised as follows: the Occitan texts reflect a more overtly feudal, courtly setting. Arras' position as a trading town, with an unusual number of literate clerks and regular literary festivals, gives its poetry not just a different focus, but also a greater concern about poetic reputation amongst peers, rather than between poet and patron.

Differing cultural expectations are reflected in the focus on the emotional side of courtly love seen in Occitan texts, and the practical side favoured by the Old French texts. The latter consider the *domna* not just the distant, unobtainable love object of troubadour verse, but on occasion as a prospect for marriage – a shift to a more pragmatic view, given that adultery is a prerequisite for courtly love in its Occitan incarnation.<sup>43</sup> That the trouvère tradition emerged after the troubadour one (late twelfth as compared to late eleventh century) meant that the trouvères were able to hold up the earlier tradition as one to which they should aspire, encapsulating ideals

---

<sup>43</sup> Mühlethaler notes that 'le question dilemmatique touche au mariage dans 21 *jeux-partis*, soit plus de 11% d'un corpus qui compte 182 pièces'. 'Disputer de mariage', pp. 203-4.

which are the epitome of courtliness. I suggest that all these nuances are exposed and played up by the binary form of the debate lyric.

Chapter Two, 'Silence and Secrecy' takes one of courtly literature's central tenets and examines how it works within dialogue. They are different concepts: secrecy is a commitment by a lover who relies on discretion, and is seen predominantly within narratives, while the dilemma about whether to remain silent is the dominant theme within lyrics. I ask how this plays out when more than one poetic voice is engaged; whether the two linguistic traditions address the issue differently; and whether speaking about silence or speech, in dialogue, allows the troubadours an opportunity to close off the space in which the *domna* could speak.

The lyrics use silence as a marker of sophistication and control – they depict themselves as able to use silence to communicate, giving them absolute mastery over themselves, their medium, and their lady. In narratives, however, silence within dialogue usually denotes a lack of sophistication – it is for characters who are naïve about love and unable to articulate their emotions. Finally, secrecy within narrative is either the marker of a love affair which will end because the secret cannot be maintained, often revealed in dialogue, or the mark of a naïve and unsophisticated lover unable to process their emotions. I consider silence and secrecy within Old French and Occitan lyrics, and then narratives. My narrative corpus includes the Old French *Roman d'Enéas*; *Cligès*; Marie de France's *lai Lanval*; the *Chasteleine de Vergy*; and the Occitan *En aquel temps c'om era gais*. The lyrics use dialogue to explore the limits of silence; the narratives use dialogue to explore the impossibility of secrecy, or to signal an inexperienced lover who relies on dialogue to order his or her thoughts.

Chapter Three, 'Monologue as Dialogue', focuses on the formal devices which suggest dialogue, demonstrating how dialogue works within a monologic frame. There are a group of male-authored *cansos* and *chansons* (lyrics which use a first-person poetic voice) which begin as monologues but which move toward a dialogic structure, and I explore how their structure suggests dialogue. I ask whether lyric and narrative texts approach dialogic structure within monologues differently, and whether the speaking voice's gender has an impact. *Cansos* principally deploy dialogue structures in two ways: either through formal devices like the rhetorical question and apostrophe (which I call suggested dialogue); or through internal dialogue, where the poetic voice is joined by another clearly-definable voice, with whom he converses.

This use of suggested or internal dialogue within a monologic frame is seen in several narratives. Here, internal or suggested dialogue can take on a very different tone from the knowing sophistication I identify within the lyrics. Characters using dialogic structure in narratives divide into those using it to navigate a situation entirely foreign to them, and those who, like the poetic voices in the *cansos*, are sophisticated and assured, and have the ability to deploy dialogue to reach their desired answer. The texts examined are Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot*, *Erec et Enide*, and *Cligès*; *Flamenca*; *Narcisus et Dané*, and *La Chasteleine de Vergy*. Finally, the chapter looks at lyrics by the *trobairitz*. Instead of avoiding dialogue with the object of their affections, the *trobairitz* start from a position of frustrated dialogue. The silence of their *amics* means they must answer their own questions about love and betrayal.

The last chapter, 'Women's Desire', returns to a thematic focus. I look at feminine voices within dialogue, asking how dialogue constructs gendered positions, and how far the feminine voice is pushed toward a binary position by the dialectical structure of debate. While this chapter does not address whether women wrote texts which contain feminine voices, I do ask if the extra-textual audience can identify 'genuine' feminine desire – and, if so, how this can be defined. I touch on the debate about how one should read feminine desire within what is almost certainly male-authored literature: can it be read as a space for the expression of feminine desire, or is it a masculine construct, a fantasy instigated by male authors? Finally, I look at parodic texts and ask what is at stake when feminine voices move into parody.

Feminine voices appear consistently in courtly debate, and this chapter considers 'serious' texts then 'parodic' texts. I use inverted commas advisedly, since the distinction between serious and parodic can be fluid. The chapter opens with *tensos* and *jeux-partis* featuring feminine voices who assert their wish for physical and emotional love through dialogue. It moves on to narratives which, like the lyric texts, include feminine voices who can be read as questioning masculine dominance of language and the courtly process. These are the Old French *Yvain* and the Occitan *Flamenca*, and two of Marie de France's *lais*, *L'Aüstic* and *Chaitivel*.

The second half of the chapter looks at dialogue's presentation of feminine desire within parody, in *pastourelles*, *pastorelas*, and *fabliaux*. I compare the presentation of shepherdesses who engage in dialogue in Old French and in Occitan, and include the earliest known example of the genre, Marcabru's *L'autrier jost'una*

*sebissa*. I trace the genre's development as it moves from one linguistic tradition to another, across the early twelfth to the early thirteenth century. Finally, dialogue in two *fabliaux*, *Berengier au lonc cul* and the *Jugement des cons*, contains feminine voices who articulate their desire but do so in the context of generic expectations hugely different from those of romance and lyric. Do these bawdy texts, the first of which parodies *Yvain*, allow feminine voices to create a space where they can express desire without becoming mouthpieces for masculine fantasy?

In summary, then, my thesis considers dialogue and debate, and I use dialectic as a means of deciphering and navigating the form. I concentrate on structure and form in chapters One and Three ('Intertextuality and Cultural Divides' and 'Monologue as Dialogue') and on thematic issues in chapters Two and Four ('Silence and Secrecy' and 'Women's Desire'). I ask how dialogue affects and effects cultural oppositions; what is at stake when more than one voice engages in debate on the merits of silence and secrecy, and how different genres treat this theme; how dialogic forms can structure monologues, and whether feminine and masculine voices deploy dialogue within monologue differently; and what dialogue tells us about the construction of gender within courtly literature.

## Chapter One

### Old French and Occitan: intertextuality and cultural divides

#### Introduction

The importance of *jeux-partis* and *tensos* to the courtly tradition lies in their embodiment of the medieval fascination with debate.<sup>44</sup> Encompassing theology, literature, and law, debate and constant questioning were defined by Abelard as ‘the first key of wisdom’.<sup>45</sup> This chapter will explore how debate reflects or creates tension between the Old French and Occitan courtly traditions, encompassing both cultural and gender differences. I explore these questions in bilingual lyrics, in the work of key poets, and in Occitan and Old French romances. While each tradition undoubtedly had common conventions, I suggest that within these differences – whether relating to class, geography, or gender – are expressed through dialectic and dialogue.

This chapter considers how the debate form allows the Artesian *trouvères* and the *troubadours* of the more feudal south to play on similarity and difference, exploiting cultural and courtly stereotypes. Lyrics which address the theme of two lovers are a means of exploring this opposition, as are bilingual lyrics, or those which play on cultural opposition. Through the work of Adam de la Halle, Jehan Bretel, and Gui d’Uisel, authors who favoured the debate form and are among the most prolific poets within the genre, I explore differing cultural approaches to the theme of two lovers.

---

<sup>44</sup> Marenbon, *Early Medieval Philosophy (480 – 1150)*, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Abelard, *Sic et Non*, p. 25.



Finally, narrative texts, through dialogue – whether inter- or intra-textual - highlight cultural differences between northern and southern France, and between Occitan and Old French. Texts which deploy these types of dialogue are Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*; the Old French narratives the *Lai de l'ombre* and the *Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*; and the Occitan romances *Flamenca* and *Jaufré*.

### **Section One: Bilingual Opposition**

This section examines cultural differences in bilingual texts, and compares treatment of the theme of two lovers in Old French and Occitan debate lyrics. In the bilingual debate lyrics examined, the use of two languages or hybrid forms both differentiates and unites: with the exception of 'Domna, tant vos ai preiada' (PC 392.7), the speakers clearly conduct a conversation understood by both parties. While it can be artificial to compare texts from two linguistic traditions in this way – or to compare texts which are notable precisely because they are unusual – I hope to place the texts and their themes in the broader context of the debate tradition, allowing examination of their place in the debate corpus. Furthermore, the three lyrics united by the 'two lovers' theme all feature one or more feminine voices. I will argue that the framework of these lyrics – the debate form – structures and to an extent instantiates the opposition seen in their content. I will argue that it is precisely this structural opposition or dialectic which creates an impact, allowing each speaker to gloss and qualify the others' position.

That the courtly tradition began in what is now termed Occitania (which included Provence, Gascony, Limousin, Poitou and Languedoc), and then spread

southwards (encompassing Lombardy in northern Italy and Catalonia), and northwards to Flanders and England is generally accepted.<sup>46</sup> The debt owed to the troubadours by the trouvères is reflected in the two traditions' debate lyrics, in content, form, and music (albeit little music is extant), as it is in other genres.<sup>47</sup> There are only three debate lyrics which feature this sort of cultural opposition via linguistic differences: PC178.1 = 167.30b, between the Count of Brittany and Gaucelm Faidit; PC 392.29 = 116.1, between Raimbaut de Vaqueiras and Coine (Conon de Béthune); and PC 392.7, between Raimbaut de Vaqueiras and an anonymous Genoese lady. The first two lyrics are composed in Occitan and Old French, and are found in manuscripts which come from the Occitan (or Italian) tradition.<sup>48</sup> The lyrics can therefore be read, as a pair, as texts which explore cultural oppositions from an Occitan perspective; PC 392.7's differing linguistic context allows it to be read as a foil to the other two lyrics. Like them it uses dialogue to explore cultural attitudes to courtly love, but its different linguistic background also sets it apart.

'Jauseme, quel vos es[t] semblant' has divided opinion on Jauseme's identity; attributions include Jean le Roux, Count of Brittany from 1237,<sup>49</sup> and Jean's father Pierre Mauclerc, Count of Brittany from 1213 until 1237.<sup>50</sup> Harvey and Paterson follow Mouzat's analysis, suggesting that Gaucelm's time at the court of Geoffrey II

---

<sup>46</sup> See Harvey, 'Courtly Culture in Medieval Occitania', pp. 8-10 and 'Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Troubadours', pp. 101-3 and 113-14 for discussion of the spread of courtly literature and the patronage of Eleanor of Aquitaine.

<sup>47</sup> Aubrey, 'The Dialectic between Occitania and France in the Thirteenth Century', p. 3, argues that 'the secular world of the north, too, began to adopt southern innovations, as poet-composers who spoke the langue d'oïl began imitating the style and structure of songs in the langue d'oc'.

<sup>48</sup> PC 178.1=167.30b is found in MSS *N* and *a1*; PC 392.29=116.1 is found in *C*, *Da*, *E*, *G*, *I*, *K*, *Q*, *T*.

<sup>49</sup> Bédier, 'Les Chansons du comte de Bretagne', pp. 477-95.

<sup>50</sup> Suchier, *Denkmäler provenzalischer Literatur und Sprache*, p. 556.

Plantagenet from before 1186 gave rise to this *partimen*, with Jauseme identified as Geoffrey himself.<sup>51</sup> The lyric survives in only two manuscripts (*a1* and *N*), with the text in *a1* ‘considerably’ occitanised, while the text in *N*, used here, retains some Occitan aberrations in the Old French stanzas and some aberrant graphies in the Occitan stanzas.

‘Jauseme, quel vos es[t] semblant’ focuses on the pleasures and pains of true love, with the Count asking Gaucelm which choice is more defensible (‘l’om doia mieus maintenir’, 2, which...do you think the more defensible): to partake of kisses and love-making at the start of his time with her, or just before he leaves her.<sup>52</sup> Gaucelm advocates immediate enjoyment, and suggests that in the time after love-making he can enjoy further kisses with his lady. The Count argues that anyone who has felt true love would choose to make love just before leaving his lady at daybreak; each speaker invokes knowledge of true love as justification for their choice. Gaucelm composed eight extant debate lyrics; of these, he responded six times (as he does in this lyric), and his approach to courtly love demonstrates humour (PC 167.47 = 370.12, ‘Perdigons, vostre sen digaz’ sees him advise Perdigo that an ugly wife should be kept locked up) but also a robust approach to love. He treads a clearly-defined moral line in his lyrics (in PC 388.4 = 167.8, ‘Ara-m digatz, Gaucelm Faidit’ he argues that a lady should not choose a friend of her husband as her lover; and that any friend who woos the wife of a friend is *fals*, 18, false-hearted). Gaucelm’s approach in this lyric, is consistent with that seen in his other debate lyrics, as he relies on a moral framework, with vocabulary that

---

<sup>51</sup> Harvey and Paterson, *Tensos and Partimens*, vol 2, p. 424, and Mouzat, *Les Poèmes de Gaucelm Faidit*, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> Unless otherwise marked, all translations of narrative texts and *jeux-partis* are my own; all translations of *tenso*s and *partimens* are by Harvey and Paterson.

reflects this stance ('sens mentir', 15; 'ses enjan', 16; 'vos e ll'autre engannador', 60), to illustrate his assertions about the right course to take.

The clear division of this early *partimen* into Old French and Occitan stanzas – on top of the identification of the French speaker with Geoffrey II, the early date of composition and the subject matter – raises questions about how cultural differences between Occitan voices and those using other vernaculars are played out at this early stage of the debate tradition. If the Count is Geoffrey II, then the lyric is predicated on both class and linguistic difference, with the royal Count debating with a troubadour described in his *vidas* as the son of a *bourgeois*. Scholars have suggested that his *vidas* are misleading<sup>53</sup> and that by the end of his career, Gaucelm was 'le familier de grands seigneurs...sa poésie trouva son terme dans des milieux et des événements qui ne manquèrent pas de grandeur.'<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, the class gap is a prism through which the lyric can be analysed, with the northern French Count throwing down the gauntlet in the opening stanza, challenging the lower class, Occitan troubadour – nominally the expert on *fin'amor* - to debate. However, the oppositions suggested by the use of two languages are not necessarily a contrary – the opposite of French is not Occitan, it is not-French; thus each speaker can be seen as forced into a contrary by the form, rather than by any innate quality of the languages themselves. This recalls Kay's delineation of the nuances of contradiction and contraries. Following Aristotle, Kay sets out oppositions as either contraries or contradictions. Contraries are binary positions ('every man is white' versus 'no man is white') while contradiction implies disagreement without this being the opposite of the original contention ('every man

---

<sup>53</sup> Boutière and Schutz, *Biographies des Troubadours*, pp. 109-26.

<sup>54</sup> Mouzat, p. 41: one *vida* describes Gaucelm as the son of a bourgeois who married a prostitute; both became hugely fat.

is white' versus 'not every man is white').<sup>55</sup> This articulation of oppositions is pertinent when considering debate; within the formal constraints of the genre, which suggest a clear-cut contrary, there is scope for differentiation which either suggests an alternative position (a contradiction) or answers Bec's 'semantic elasticity'.<sup>56</sup> This suggests oppositional terms which inflect each other, and which generate paradoxes, with a 'both/and' tension.

The topic, which focuses on physical love as the goal of emotional love, gives piquancy to the form: it forces precision, and underlines debate poetry's game of oppositions. The Count's theme is physical and suggestive within an emotional framework, and the opening lines recall legal debate: the argument will be won by the speaker who can better marshal his arguments:

Jauseme, quel vos es[t] semblant  
que l'om doia mieus maintenir (1-2)

Gaucelm, which alternative do you think the more defensible.

Gaucelm presents himself as a speaker who knows true love and who can speak about it with authority – his honest and ethical words which truly reflect his feelings will win the debate for him and convince his interlocutor (and by extension their audience). Vocabulary like 'sens mentir' (without a word of a lie, 15); 'ses enjan' (free of guile, 16); 'deu s'en per dreich repentir' (it is right he should live to regret it, 22) emphasises Gaucelm's link between language, love and truth – combined with strong moral undertones. This is the approach of a poet whose status as the class

---

<sup>55</sup> Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>56</sup> Bec, 'L'Antithèse poétique chez Bernard de Ventadour', p. 119.

underdog in the debate gives him the opportunity to focus on the veracity of his feelings and the joy which stems from a freely-given, shared experience with his lady; his experience of true love gives him the moral high ground despite his humble birth. The Count concentrates on what he will gain, having chosen when to enjoy the gift his lady offers; his concern for her feelings seems non-existent. Outsourcing responsibility for his behaviour ('cuant hom est bien d'amor espris', 25, when a man is consumed with love) to overwhelming emotion, the Count takes the line that 'fine amor' (45) absolves the lover from any blame from his peers, let alone from his lady; tellingly, his conviction is explicitly linked to his ability to win the argument ('vencutz serés de la tenson', 24, you will be defeated in the dispute; and 'choizi avetz le sordeior', 47, you have made the worse choice).

The Count's blunter approach to courtly love may be linked to the social disparity between the speakers which the debate form itself creates in a self-reinforcing game which blurs the line between suggestion and historic reality. The Count's refusal to consider the finer points of courtly behaviour, as Gaucelm does, while attributing his happy blundering to the very authority ('fine amor') which would in fact advocate an alternative approach, smacks of the excesses of the nobility stereotyped in courtly literature. That this lyric – playing on cultural opposition – is found in an Occitan manuscript, framed by other Occitan lyrics, suggests an Occitan interest in cultural differences communicated via language.

Like 'Jauseme, quel vos es[t] semblant', 'Seigner Coines' features Occitan and Old French forms, highlighting cultural similarities and differences through language. Raimbaut de Vaqueiras invites Coine to consider which of two lovers should be chosen by their lady: the silent lover, or the one who declares himself. Raimbaut

argues that the silent lover will get the lady, since his sighs will win her for him - any lady worthy of his love will recognize his innate qualities despite (or, indeed, because of) his silence. This position echoes Bec's 'both/and' conception of dialectic, with Raimbaut able to contradict Coine's position by suggesting that his silence is in fact a message in itself – he is thus speaking and silent. Coine responds that a sensible lover should not fear speaking out to his lady; like a doctor who cannot cure a patient unless they tell him of their illness, he argues that his lady cannot return his love (or 'cure' him) until he has told her of it.

The lyric extends to five stanzas (the last is incomplete). Scholars are unsure of the identity of Coine; most support the identification of Coine with the trouvère Conon de Béthune. This argument is countered by Bec, who has suggested that Raimbaut was the sole composer.<sup>57</sup> However, Harvey and Paterson take the view that historical circumstances make the creation of a fictive interlocutor by Raimbaut unlikely, given that Raimbaut probably met Conon de Béthune during the Fourth Crusade.<sup>58</sup> They argue that they met via diplomatic contact between Conon and Boniface, Raimbaut's patron. They also note that the manuscript tradition for this lyric is patchy, with eight extant manuscripts, all of which descend from a defective archetype in which stanza five is incomplete. Thus it is unlikely that the archetype preserved either poet's stanzas in a linguistically pure form, given that each manuscript shows signs of random distribution of Occitan and Old French forms in every stanza (for example, Coine refers to his *domna*, 27; Raimbaut refers to his *dame*, 37). This deployment of words from the opposing linguistic tradition can be read as a deliberate example of each speaker playing on the binary form to

---

<sup>57</sup> Bec, 'A propos de deux *partimens* bilingues. *Tenson* réelle ou *tenson* fictive?', pp. 413-28.

<sup>58</sup> Harvey and Paterson, p. 1092.

acknowledge and gloss the others' cultural assumptions. In other words, the form intersects with the use of language to create a cultural effect; without the framework of binary oppositions, the impact of this knowing deployment of such terms would be lost.

The lyric discusses a recurring dilemma within the courtly tradition, and the debate corpus: speaking out or remaining silent. Raimbaut sets out the dilemma; Coine favours speaking out. His position is clear: the lady cannot intuit that someone loves her, so a lover should tell her. His support for this includes references to Christian history:

que Judas fo perduz per son folage  
qui de proier no s'ausa enardir (14-15)

For Judas was damned through his foolishness in not daring to be so bold as to pray.

He also uses a medical analogy:

Fols es qui cela al mege son malage  
qe·l n'es plus greus e plus greu ensoage,  
anz lo dei hom si per tems descobrir,  
si sa dame vol, puosc' ades garir (30-33)

Only a fool hides from the doctor his illness which becomes thereby more painful for him and more difficult to cure: on the contrary, a man ought to reveal it so promptly that—if his lady is willing—he may be cured at once.



This allusion is a commonplace within courtly literature: love as a sickness is set out in detail in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris* and is frequently seen in courtly literature.<sup>59</sup> This antithesis (illness versus healing, in this case) is a basic component of courtly lyric, which the debate form highlights.<sup>60</sup>

The French forms in this extract are clear (*malage*, *ensoage*). Coine's position – expressed via northern French linguistic forms – becomes associated with a northern approach to courtly love and is more practical than that of Raimbaut, whose approach treads a delicate line between, action, inaction, and the communication of emotion. Raimbaut takes the view that remaining silent is better:

car cel que tem sap d'amor son usage

e tramet li fin' amor per message:

si no la enqer, enqerran la-l sospir.

Lo ben q'eu qer faz ma domna-m merir! (22-25)

For the one who is fearful understands love's ways and sends his beloved true love through a messenger: though he does not beseech her his sighs will make his request for him. The favour I seek, I cause my lady to bestow on me!

As we can see, Raimbaut quickly moves from silence to a more nuanced approach: his silence will inform his sighs, which will act as a messenger to his lady. The citation ends with the conviction that his message will compel his lady to do as he wishes. This move from a position which appears simple and uncommunicative – total silence – to a position in which even his silence is a form of communication

---

<sup>59</sup> Dragonetti, *La Technique poétique des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>60</sup> Dragonetti, pp. 55-61.

has two effects: he undermines Coine's argument, and boxes the lady into a corner. She must now negotiate and correctly interpret not only aspiring lovers' speech, but also their silence. Any failure on her part will mean she has betrayed his trust:

que cel que qer no se fida en lauzors  
ni en sa dame ni el ben qe-il fai,  
qe-l querre fai de joi privat salvage (36-38)

The man who asks for what he wants places no trust in singing a lady's praises nor in his lady herself nor in the reward she brings him, for asking turns a discreet joy into an unyielding one.

This is a poet able to recognize courtly *topoi*, and confident enough in his craft to treat them with sophistication; the message delivered at the end of 'Segner Coines' leaves Raimbaut the winner in this verbal and emotional contest. He has bested his interlocutor and his lady, and has done so in a context which encompasses an implicit audience of Occitan and northern French listeners, drawn by the fame of each participant.

What we can see in these lyrics is a play on cultural oppositions, presented from an Occitan perspective. These oppositions imposed on two languages by the poetic form create a dialectic between two cultures, with the form key to the creation of contradictions and contraries. The play between the two poles of sameness and difference is constant, with the use of isolated words in the opposing language reinforcing the cultural overlap. The contrast between the northern French and Occitan approaches to courtly conventions is not clear-cut; the northern French voices are clearly aware of the Occitan tradition and it is this awareness which

allows them to take up key words or perspectives and use the binary form of the debate to nuance or suggest difference – on this basis, the trouvères are far more than the simplistic ‘imitateurs d’une tradition déjà établie’ which Vinaver describes.<sup>61</sup>

The suggestion of cultural and linguistic difference based on and expressed through formal opposition is also seen in ‘Domna, tant vos ai preiada’. This lyric comes from a different linguistic tradition from those discussed above in that divisions between each language are clearly marked, with no linguistic overlap through hybrid forms or the use of isolated words in the other language. Nonetheless, it is included here since, like the lyrics above, it explores how dialogue can be used to mark cultural differences in the approach to love.

Probably composed c.1190,<sup>62</sup> its interest lies in its rarity: it is bilingual and features a feminine voice. Gaunt describes the stanzas attributed to the Genoese lady as ‘one of the earliest surviving examples of a Northern Italian dialect and...the first surviving attempt to compose lyric poetry in Italian’.<sup>63</sup> He goes on to argue that the lyric’s other obvious interest lies in the gendering of the voices. In a corpus of 157 Occitan *tensos* and *partimens* (as edited by Harvey and Paterson), five feature attributed feminine voices – a mere handful, with other *tensos* such as PC 461.56 between a *domna* and *donzela* considered fictive thanks to the lack of clear attribution.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Vinaver, *A la recherche d’une poésie médiévale*, p. 42.

<sup>62</sup> The version and translation cited is Linskill’s: *The Poems of the Troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras*, p. 98.

<sup>63</sup> Gaunt, ‘Sexual Difference and the Metaphor of Language in a Troubadour Poem’, p. 297.

<sup>64</sup> Bruckner, Shepard and White (*Songs of the Women Troubadours*) attribute sixteen *tensos* to trobairitz.

Raimbaut de Vaqueiras – who features in this lyric and in ‘Seigner Coines’ – was active between c.1180 and 1205. Thought to be of humble origins, he is known to have spent time in northern Italy, and joined his patron Boniface I of Monferrato on the Fourth Crusade in 1202.<sup>65</sup> His *tensos* highlight the moral duty of a lover to treat his lady with honour and fidelity, an attitude which also emerges in the two lyrics discussed above. This lyric opens with Raimbaut begging his lady to show him *merces* (mercy, 10); the conventional opening sees him equate his efforts to woo her with the reward he feels he deserves:

Domna, tant vos ai preiada,  
si.us plaz, q'amar me voillaz (1-2)

Lady, I have so entreated you to consent, if it please you, to love me.

His request is couched in financial and feudal terms. He wants just reward for the services he has rendered her as her vassal (‘vostr’ endomenjaz’, 3), and his reward will be both emotional and financial:

per qe.m plai vostr' amistaz. (6)

So that your friendship delights me.

e pois serai meilz pagaz  
qe s'era mia.ill ciutaz,  
ab l'aver q'es ajostaz,  
dels Genoes. (11-14)

---

<sup>65</sup> Linskill, pp. 2-37.

Then shall I be more satisfied than if the city of the Genoese belonged to me, with all the wealth amassed in it.

Setting out his terms explicitly prompts an equally forthright response - one which is designed to shock on several levels. The Genoese lady rebuffs Raimbaut's advances in an opening line which neatly encapsulates her disdain and the social gap between them:

Jujar, voi no sei corteso (15)

Minstrel, you aren't courteous.

In one swoop she dismisses his suit, using his own criterion – courtliness – against him. Dell suggests that 'gender [in trouvère song] has generic implications and feminine desire appears as registrally distinct from masculine'.<sup>66</sup> She argues that the 'implicit binary' always contained in trouvère songs is 'not sustained with any consistency; it is never fixed'.<sup>67</sup> Dell's argument, that genre operates like Saussure's understanding of language, as 'a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of others',<sup>68</sup> can be seen here. I suggest that this feminine voice and those examined below embody the movement or instability identified by Dell, in that they use the signposts of convention or genre but do so for their own ends, giving their voice a twist which both differentiates them from masculine voices, and also shifts the boundaries of the genre, moving them toward an acknowledgement of feminine nuance. As in the two lyrics discussed above, we can see a debate about love onto

---

<sup>66</sup> Dell, *Desire by Gender and Genre in Trouvère Song*, p.2.

<sup>67</sup> Dell, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 114.

which language and cultural opposition is layered; conventions and courtly terms are suggested, acknowledged, appropriated and nuanced by speakers who both create and collapse difference.

Stanza two establishes the Genoese lady's boundaries; she differentiates between herself and her suitor on several levels, starting with his occupation ('Juar', 15); his courtly qualifications ('voi no sei corteso', 15); his geographical origin ('Provenzal malaurao', 21, accursed Provencal); his state of mind ('sozo, mozo, escalvao', 23, filthy, stupid crop-head); and finally her marital status ('q'eu chu bello mari ò / qe voi no sei, ben lo so', 25-26, because I have a husband more handsome than you, as I well know). Despite her rejection – which combines forensic precision with humour, as she deconstructs his attributes with ever-increasing criticism – stanza three sees Raimbaut continue his suit as though she hasn't spoken, with more conventional praise in the same vein as his opening stanza:

Domna gent' et essernida,

gai' e pros e conoissenz

(29-30)

Lady, you who are gracious, distinguished, joyous, excellent and wise.

This refusal to acknowledge the Genoese lady's words is another site of opposition between the interlocutors; it is as if her words disappear into a lacuna in Raimbaut's consciousness while he continues his (optimistic) address. There is undoubted humour arising from the gap between what he hears and what the Genoese lady actually says. However, I suggest that the gap between their respective positions, the mutual incomprehension as Raimbaut ignores her completely and the Genoese lady dismisses his words as unsuited on every level to what she seeks in a lover, is

another plank in the dialectic which emerges the moment the Genoese lady responds to Raimbaut. This polarity works on two levels throughout – she deconstructs his words and rejects him on an intellectual level, while he rejects her response by continuing as though she has not spoken. This is the sexual opposition which has been discussed by Gaunt, with each speaker operating on a different plane. Consciously and unconsciously the speakers create and play with a dialectic between masculine and feminine, spoken and unspoken, Provençal and Genoese, minstrel and mercantile, and married and unmarried, with the Genoese lady's speech at the very least forcing the audience to listen to her words, which push at the boundaries of courtly conventions – in Dell's terms, she embodies movement, refusing to conform to Raimbaut's conception of what a 'feminine' speaker should say. The play on the Provençal / Genoese dialectic continues as the lyric progresses, with the Genoese lady ever more insistent as she rejects his geographical origin and his language ('to proenzalesco', 71, this Provençal speech [or way]), continuing with the emphatic 'no vollo questo lati' (81, I do not want this talk [or language]).

Gender opposition allows the Genoese lady to play Raimbaut at his own game, demolishing his challenge as she sets out the numerous ways in which she rejects him. Raimbaut's response is interesting; his refusal to listen to or engage with her words places her in a difficult position. In ignoring her protests he pushes her into the place he has assigned her. His indifference to her bold responses leaves her at a disadvantage: he requires a malleable Genoese, with pliability a central attraction; he gets a shock which would no doubt have tickled their audience. His refusal to engage mirrors hers; her entry into debate leaves her no better off by the end of the lyric. Part of the humour of this lyric stems from the sense that Raimbaut will

continue his suit, in the same vein at the earliest opportunity, her protests notwithstanding.

The Genoese lady's demolition of Raimbaut operates on several levels – but she finishes her list of points with the assertion that she doesn't want him as she already has a better looking husband. Her choice is the man who reflects well on her, in marriage, looks and wealth. In 'Segner Coines' and 'Jauseme, quel vos es[t] semblant', the positions adopted by the northern French voices are just as pragmatic and precise: what they seek are lovers or situations in which their practical requirements can be met, with emotional requirements running in tandem with the practical rather than leading it, as they do for Occitan poets.

The cultural nuances examined above have been seen in bilingual lyrics with differing themes, all of which reflect but also create cultural meaning – as Zumthor argues, 'le texte reste ainsi étranger, dans son existence propre, au devenir historique...Événement, il entre comme tel dans l'histoire dont il est un constituant'.<sup>69</sup> However, these three lyrics form a tiny proportion of the Occitan and Old French debate lyric corpus. Is cultural opposition as clearly discernable when we take linguistic opposition out of the equation? In order to examine whether and how the cultural awareness and opposition I have argued for is also at work within the wider corpus, I will examine three lyrics – two in Occitan, one in Old French - whose thematic and generic similarities allow analysis of the way their respective cultural milieux inform the differences between them.

---

<sup>69</sup> Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, p. 44.



PC 242.69 = 12a.1, 'S'ie.us qier conseil', between Guiraut de Borneill and Alamanda, sees the lover seek advice from a maid-in-waiting concerning his lady. Composed before 1183, this lyric's popularity is reflected in its inclusion in no less than fourteen manuscripts. Harvey and Paterson follow Guida's 'persuasive' argument that Alamanda should be identified with Alamanda d'Estanc, named in Uc de Saint Circ's *razo*.<sup>70</sup> PC 461.56, 'Bona domna, tan vos ay fin coratje', between a *Domna* and *Donzela* (a lady and a maid-in-waiting) considers a lover's suitability and whether the lady should forgive him his boasting and fickle nature. Probably composed after 1212, the lyric has prompted critical discussion about whether it qualifies as a fictive *tenso*. The final lyric is an Old French *jeu-parti* (R1962),<sup>71</sup> 'Lorete, suer, par amor', between Lorete and 'Une Dame' (a lady). Probably composed in 1310, two feminine voices discuss which of two knights the lady should choose as her husband, when one declares his intentions and the other remains silent, but tries to persuade the lady through the good offices of her friends.

'S'ie.us qier conseil' and 'Bona domna' both see the maid in the pivotal position of advisor. Shaping the reactions of lover and lady, she relies on feudal and military rhetoric. The language of rights and responsibilities, of checks and balances between those bound by the bonds of love permeates her arguments to each party, as do their responses. Describing courtly love through the prism of the feudal system is perhaps unsurprising for two Occitan lyrics composed in the late twelfth century, when Occitania went through political and religious change culminating in the Albigensian Crusade, which some scholars argue had a huge impact on the production of troubadour lyric poetry and the exchange of ideas between northern

---

<sup>70</sup> Harvey and Paterson, p. 714.

<sup>71</sup> Långfors, *Recueil général des jeux-partis Français*, vol. II, p. 251.

and southern France.<sup>72</sup> While it is likely that Occitania contained a variety of seigneurial structures (Paterson describes ‘a considerable diversity of social arrangements from one region to another’) the feudal structure would have been known to many troubadours and is a common motif within lyric.<sup>73</sup> The juxtaposition of words and actions is an interesting element in each lyric, with Guiraut using words to regain his lady’s affections in ‘S’ie.us qier conseil’ when his actions have alienated her, and the maid using words to mediate between the two. In love, it seems, regular diplomacy is needed if the lover and lady are to remain in equilibrium. Like the negotiations which take place after a war, the maid must arrange the lovers’ peace.

‘S’ie.us qier conseil’ sees the maid stating that:

que si l’uns faill, l’autre coven que blanda,  
que lors destrics no.is creisca ni s’espanda (11-12)

So if the one cools, the other needs to be more kindly and forgiving so that their distress does not increase or spread.

anz er oimais sa promessa derrieira,  
que qe.us digatz,  
si.s destreing tant que contra vos sofeira  
trega ni fi ni patz. (45-48)

This will henceforth be her last concession, whatever you may say, if she brings herself to suffer you a truce or peace or end to your quarrel.

---

<sup>72</sup> Aubrey, pp. 1-3.

<sup>73</sup> Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, p. 19.

Likewise, in 'Bona domna' the maid argues that the lady is responsible for the well-being of her lover, as though he was one of her demesnes:

Pero, si mor, vostre er lo dampnatje,  
c'austra domna mas vos a grat no.l ve  
ni en luy non a poder ni senhoratje. (6-8)

But if he dies the blame will be yours for no other lady besides you pleases him or has power or dominion over him.<sup>74</sup>

vuelh que digatz, dona, per cal razos  
poyretz estar que merces no vo.n prenda,  
que mil sospirs ne fa.l iorn engoysos,  
don per un sol no.l denhatz far emenda (37-40)

Please tell me, lady, for what reason it could be that you won't pity him; for a thousand sighs torment his days, and then you don't see fit to reward a single one.

As the conduit for love, the maid wields power disproportionate to her lowly status, setting up a layer of class opposition which in 'S'ie.us qier conseil' echoes the relationship between the knight and the shepherdess seen in the *pastourelles* and *pastorelas*.<sup>75</sup> This position shifts slightly in 'Bona domna', where the maid occupies the role of the lover, so that the lyric contains two feminine voices – unusual in itself. The tensions which the maid embodies, as mediator and pivot between masculine and feminine, between love and rejection, between a high-status lady and a lowly

---

<sup>74</sup> Version and translation cited that of Bruckner et al, *Songs of the Women Troubadours*.

<sup>75</sup> I shall examine the feminine voice in the *pastorela* and *pastourelle* in Chapter Four.

lover, illustrate Kay's point that 'courtly texts do not so much propound precepts as raise alternatives, permitting contradictions to surface, but within a restricted agenda of shared preoccupations'.<sup>76</sup>

The lady's response to the maid's representations in 'Bona domna' reflect this lyric's military rhetoric; like the maid, she describes the lover as a possession she can dispose of:

Na donzela, no m'en podetz rependre,  
que.l dey m'amor ab aytal covinen  
que el fos mieus per donar e per vendre  
e que tostem fos a mo mandamen (25-28)

Maiden, you can't scold me about this for I gave him my love with an agreement:  
he'd be mine to give away or sell and he'd always be at my command.

There is a sense that the lady's resistance has been eroded by the words of the maid. That the lady is won over or defeated by words is key; the lover's actions have prompted only negative feelings, with no recorded change in his behaviour that would prompt a change in the lady's attitude towards him on this basis. The value placed on the force of a persuasive argument thus increases: since the contraries of good lover versus bad cannot be resolved, the outcome is a synthesis: the lady will move her position to one of acceptance, while the lover remains as he was. Like rival lords managing their estates, the lady and the lover wish to maximise their investment; he wishes to retain her love, since this would bring him

---

<sup>76</sup> Kay, 'Courts, clerks, and courtly love', p. 85.

kudos; the lady, on the other hand, has seen an opportunity to dispose of him and seems far more inclined to 'give [him] away or sell'. The competing forces at work on the lady across these two lyrics are the feudal system in miniature: the lady's position is hemmed in by the lover to whom she has a responsibility as his *seigneur*, and the maid's role as advisor pushes the lady toward an outcome she has explicitly rejected.

'Lorete, suer' is an Old French lyric between two unidentified ladies, Lorete and another lady addressed as *suer* (sister). Like 'Bona Domna', it uses feudal imagery to explore the merits of a lover. It is one of 26 lyrics which appear in the *Chansonnier d'Oxford* (I), and is the only lyric from this manuscript in which Rolant (probably Rolant of Reims) does not appear as an interlocutor.<sup>77</sup> It is linked to his corpus by the two judges (the countess of Linaige and her sister Mahaut of Commercy), also cited in R1074, between Rolant and 'une dame'.<sup>78</sup> Långfors dates 'Lorete, suer' and the other 25 *jeux-partis* in the *Chansonnier d'Oxford* to the eve of the expedition of Henri of Luxembourg to Rome, in 1310. He notes that 'il faut voir dans ce groupe la dernière floraison d'un genre littéraire qui avait eu sa plus grande vogue une quarantaine d'années plus tôt'.<sup>79</sup> Thus this lyric was probably composed significantly later than 'S'ie.us qier conseil' and 'Bona domna'. Difficult though it is to compare lyrics which are either not representative of the broad tradition, or come from vastly differing linguistic and social backgrounds, I would like to pick out some differences between the way in which the motif of a lady choosing a lover is addressed in the Old French and Occitan traditions. I do so on the basis that, while there is no suggestion that those who composed 'Lorete, suer' were aware of the

---

<sup>77</sup> See R1307, Långfors, Vol. II, p. 234.

<sup>78</sup> Långfors, p. liv.

<sup>79</sup> Långfors, p. lvix.

two Occitan lyrics I have discussed, the topic addressed was one which recurred within the courtly lyric across both traditions.

The first point to note about 'Lorete, suer' is that Lorete has two *chevaliers* who not only love her, but wish to marry her. This establishes a very different mood from that of the Occitan lyrics. Audience and interlocutor are moved toward a set of assumptions and social mores at odds with those which structure the Occitan concept of *fin'amor*: Instead of extra-marital love – which of course includes an onus on secrecy – this lyric explicitly aims for marriage. This infers public rather than private emotion, and a different status from that of the courtly lover. It is also interesting that the two lovers are described as loving Lorete ('andui vos ont bien ameit', 6, both have loved you well), thus fulfilling their courtly obligations – and yet they wish to translate their existing ties with her to the more public state of marriage. This is the crux of the debate: should Lorete choose the lover who keeps his wish to himself, and asks her friends to help him persuade her, or the lover who publicly declares his feelings to her?

Lorete is clear: any man who feels true love, whose heart has been taken by Love, will also feel *paors* (fear, 22) and will not be able to speak to her directly; this is the superior lover. In addition, the intervention of her friends means that she can rest safe in the knowledge that she will not be blamed for her choice, since she was persuaded into it:

A lui m'acort, k'il est de sans garnis,

Cant par l'acort de mes amis me prant:

Jai n'an serai blasmee de la gent. (24-26)

I give myself to him, who is filled with sense, when he wins me through the agreement of my friends: I will never be blamed for this by others.

There is a tension between two types of lover: should *Amors* render a lover dumbstruck and timid, or make him articulate his feelings to his lady? The conflict between Love and Reason is an ongoing one within courtly literature,<sup>80</sup> and Lorete's interlocutor argues that:

Amors met home an ardour

Et en derverie. (31-32)

Love makes a man ardent and puts him in a spin.

Lorete's interlocutor acknowledges the argument but collapses the opposition by her wish to choose the man who speaks to her friends, a new stance which removes her from the established binaries.

What conclusions can be drawn from this lyric, so distant in terms of date of composition and language from the Occitan lyrics which address a similar topic? I suggest that differing approaches to courtly love can be discerned, but that all three lyrics contain dialectic which illustrates and enables the articulation of difference. The Occitan lyrics, composed earlier than 'Lorete, suer', describe courtly love in feudal terms, with the lover and lady caught up in a vassal – lord relationship which enables and constrains their love; their relationship is also bound by secrecy, since the lover is courting a married woman. The *jeux-partis* transfer the Occitan approach into a different social milieu, and support Doss-Quinby's argument that

---

<sup>80</sup> Dragonetti, p. 237.

‘when women broach a subject, whether arguing with a man or with each other, they seem particularly attentive to the woman’s role in a relationship, intent on defining how a woman should act towards a lover, and the extent to which she should respect the principles of *fin’amors*’.<sup>81</sup> The composition of *jeux-partis* took place in Arras, a trading town and artistic centre: the large proportion of literate clerks needed to support the administrative burden within Arras meant that *jeux-partis* were composed for an audience whose preoccupations – marriage, reputation, status, and money - were those of the emerging *bourgeoisie*. The externalities of love, in terms of behaviour, legal ties, and status within a community, are seen throughout ‘Lorete, suer’ – which provides the extra twist of a feminine perspective on the dilemma. As Tyssens suggests, ‘dans la plupart de ces dialogues s’affrontent en somme deux conformismes, un conformisme réaliste et avisé, qui est presque toujours celui du partenaire féminin, et le conformisme courtois de leurs interlocuteurs et interlocutrices’.<sup>82</sup> This can be seen in the lyrics I have examined, which establish a gendered divide.

This section has picked out texts which, while united by theme or by linguistic structure, were unusual examples from the debate lyric corpus. The next section will consider the work of three troubadours and trouvères who favoured the debate form – Adam de la Halle, Jehan Bretel, and Gui d’Uisel – and will examine how the social milieu plays out in their work. As leading proponents of debate poetry (although their work is not confined to this genre), appraising their lyrics will allow me to place those considered in this section within a broader context.

---

<sup>81</sup> Doss-Quinby, ‘The Feminine Voice in the Old French *jeu-parti*’, p. 505.

<sup>82</sup> Tyssens, ‘Voix de femmes dans la lyrique d’oïl’, p. 383.



## Section Two: Key Figures

Here I consider three lyrics by three leading composers – one troubadour and two trouvères – which are united by a common theme (one popular within the debate corpus), that of reputation and its link to language. Gui d’Uisel favoured the debate form; he composed seven debate lyrics, eight *cansos* and two *pastorelas*.<sup>83</sup> He wrote toward the end of the twelfth century, and the *partimen* with Maria de Ventadorn, ‘Gui d’Uisel, be.m peza de vos’ (PC 295.1 = 194.9) was clearly a popular text – it is reproduced in ten manuscripts.<sup>84</sup> Two leading *trouvères* in the debate tradition in terms of reputation and productivity are Adam de la Halle and Jehan Bretel. I have selected two *jeux-partis* by Adam de la Halle and Jehan Bretel, and two by Grieviler and Jehan Bretel. I will argue that the debate form itself enables a dialectic between similarity and difference. This allows texts within this corpus to play on a shared tradition which simultaneously suggests cultural similarities and differences. Within the development of the debate tradition, two key elements play a part: chronology and culture. As we have seen, the Occitan debate corpus is in chronological terms the earlier of the two linguistic traditions, with the *trouvère* debate corpus playing on an existing body of texts; the markers of cultural difference suggested by the form include class and love as a practical or emotional force.

I take ‘Gui d’Uisel, be.m peza de vos’ first since Gui was active at the end of the twelfth century (c. 1195-96);<sup>85</sup> he predates Adam de la Halle and Jehan Bretel, who were active midway through the thirteenth century. Addressing the texts

---

<sup>83</sup> Audiau, *Les Poésies des quatre troubadours d’Ussel*.

<sup>84</sup> Harvey and Paterson, pp. 932-40.

<sup>85</sup> Gaunt and Kay, *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, p. 284.

chronologically allows me to consider whether and how the Old French texts differ from those in Occitan. Gui d'Uisel was castellan of Ussel (in the Limousin), and had two brothers and a cousin (Eble, Peire and Elias respectively), all of whom composed lyrics. 'Gui d'Uicel, be.m peza de vos' boasts two *razos* – one in MS *P*, which focuses on Gui, stating that he was depressed for a significant amount of time after the rupture with his lady which was set out in 'Ara.m digatz vostre semblan' (PC 194.2 = 136.1), a *tenso* between Gui and his cousin Elias. The second *razo* is found in MS *H*, and describes Maria's decision to compose a lyric about equality in love after a dispute with her lover, Sir Uc lo Brun – this *razo* places more emphasis on Maria as an independent woman and composer, able to negotiate courtly conventions in her own right. The particular interest in this *partimen* lies in its authors: Gui was an author well-versed in the debate form, and Maria de Ventadorn is a named female poet; its date means that it could be the earliest genuine debate lyric between identifiable male and female poets. Rieger dates it from 1196-98, on the basis of intertextual links between this lyric, 'Ges, si tot ma don' et amors' by Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, and 'Si be-m partetz, mala dompna, de vos' by Gui d'Ussel.<sup>86</sup> Raimbaut and Gui's songs both address the same theme – abandoning a lady but not giving up singing. Rieger suggests that in 'Gui d'Uicel, be.m peza de vos' Maria's versification corresponds to Raimbaut's, while her rhymes correspond to Gui's; such an approach suggests a sophisticated feminine voice and an awareness of previous texts, knowingly echoed in this lyric.<sup>87</sup> For a feminine voice already making the leap from the position of silent *domna* to active participant, this deliberate espousal of Raimbaut's rhymes and versification

---

<sup>86</sup> Rieger, *Trobairitz*, p. 266 note 525.

<sup>87</sup> Rieger, p. 271.

places her in the middle of masculine conventions whilst simultaneously subverting them.

Gui's other debates address typical courtly themes. To debate whether a man and a woman should behave as equals in love, as he does in 'Gui d'Uicel, be.m peza de vos', marks a shift toward one of the key questions which dominated – whether overtly or by implication – the trobairitz canon. Maria opens the lyric; her rhyme scheme echoes that used by Gui in 'Si be-m partetz, mala dompna, de vos' (abbacdd) and picks up his vocabulary. Her opening lines are:

Gui d'Uicel, be.m peza de vos  
quar vos es laisatz de chantar (1-2)

Gui d'Uicel, it greatly grieves me that you have abandoned singing.

The opening stanza uses vocabulary deployed by Gui in 'Si be-m partetz, mala dompna, de vos', inverting its implications. Maria's use of *razos*, for example, is an ironic dig at Gui's self-confident refusal to sing; 'quar sabetz d'aitals razos' (since you are knowledgeable about such matters, 4), and pushes him to justify his previous monologue on his disappointment in women. The earlier reference to what his 'mala dompna' has taught him, instructions from an external source he must follow ('Car apres ai del vostr'enseignamen', 6, because I have taken your instructions) is picked up when Maria refers to the rules which lovers follow:

ieu vos deman si deu far engualmen  
dona per drut, quan lo.i quer franchamen,  
com el per leis tot quan tanh az amor,  
segon lo dreg qu'entendon amador (5-8)

I ask you whether, when a lover sincerely ask it of her, a lady is obliged to do equally for him as he ought for her all that pertains to love, according to the code that lovers acknowledge.

Maria's ability to take masculine vocabulary and arguments and use them against her interlocutor is seen throughout, as she uses vocabulary and ideas associated with the masculine approach to love to make her point about equality. While scholars such as Kay have argued that one key issue in dialogue lyric featuring a feminine voice is that she may fall victim to a misogynistic take on courtly love, and Paterson has noted that 'the form and conventions of dialogue genres may impose male ways of speech...Gui's choice of equality rather than subservience coincides with self-interest', I suggest that Maria is able, here, to carve out a feminine space at the edge of an undeniably masculine discourse by appropriating masculine language and conventions and redefining them.<sup>88</sup> The chain of rhyming words at line five of each stanza provides a snapshot of how each speaker uses key terms from the courtly lexicon to counter the other's argument, with each term set in opposition to the next or previous one. The chain *engualmen-breumen-comandamen-finamen-humilmen-leialmen* (the latter from line six of the final stanza) sees Maria use the words *engualmen-comandamen-humilmen*, suggesting that a good lover should do as his lady commands, having beseeched her humbly for her love. Gui's responds that he will reply forthwith (*breumen*), that if she loves

---

<sup>88</sup> Paterson, *World of the Troubadours*, p. 261; Kay, *Subjectivity*, pp. 98-99.

him more deeply (*finamen*) than she should honour him equally, and that it is shameful for a lady to ignore the equality of two hearts joined in love – the lover should not love the lady in more humility (*humilmen*) than she loves him. Each stanza takes up the preceding point and glosses it, allowing the speakers to nuance the key rhyme words each deploys in a series of contradictions. The topic is given piquancy by the attention given to it by successive troubadours, and by the intervention of an attributable feminine voice. Gui and Maria – educated, aristocratic troubadours – focus on the theory behind the debate, on the attributes of the ideal courtly lover and his lady, each using feudal terms. Maria favours a lord – vassal relationship in which the vassal is beholden to his lord, while Gui defines it as a reciprocal relationship in which each party rewards the other equally.

This lyric, an early foray into dialogue by a *trobairitz*, looks at the theory behind courtly love. Its focus on the subtleties of language, with no suggestion that the lover will act on the discussion, differs from the link between love, language and action seen in the *trouvère* lyrics. The two troubadour voices participate in a debate set at a distance from the everyday concerns seen within much of the *trouvère* debate lyric (concerns which differ from those elaborated in *trouvère chansons*, which echo the more abstract emotional focus of the troubadour *cansos*). The expertise of the *trouvères* lies in their ability to cross the boundaries of two worlds, social and geographical. They use and shape the courtly conventions which originated in Occitania, and repurpose them for a different audience. Socially, these *trouvères* also form the bridge between Arras' growing *bourgeoisie* and the

aristocrats who patronised many of the poets (Adam de la Halle, for example, was a cleric in the household of Robert, Count of Artois).<sup>89</sup>

Adam de la Halle and Jehan Bretel's work encompassed *jeux-partis*, *chansons*, *motets*, *rondeaux* and plays. From Arras, both benefited from the town's educational and cultural strengths. Jehan Bretel (c. 1200 – 1271) was 'sergens iretavles de la riviere Saint-Vaast', as was his father; he composed just short of 90 *jeux-partis*, and partnered Adam de la Halle in fifteen of these.<sup>90</sup> Adam (c. 1250-1288) wrote much of his life history into his play the *Jeu de la Feuillée* and his *Congé*,<sup>91</sup> from these we know that his poetic persona's father was employed in Arras' *échevinage*, and that Adam – again, in persona - left his wife in Arras to pursue his studies in Paris.

Arras' dominance of trouvère output does not, of course, mean that every trouvère was a cleric; *bourgeois* communities contained a high percentage of merchants and other associated professions.<sup>92</sup> This milieu perhaps explains the pragmatic approach seen in *jeux-partis*: a preoccupation with the practicalities of love such as success in marriage and the impact of language or rumour on reputation are testament to life in a close-knit society in which an articulate middle class was the emerging force.

---

<sup>89</sup> Symes, pp. 232-38; Dragonetti, p. 341.

<sup>90</sup> Kibler, Zinn, Earp, eds., *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*, p. 494.

<sup>91</sup> Probably written in 1276 or 1277: Langlois, *Adam le Bossu*, p. v.

<sup>92</sup> See Symes, p. 226 - Symes has estimated that Arras was responsible for over 60% of the *jeu-parti* corpus (p. 226), and Delmaire, *Le diocèse d'Arras de 1093 au milieu de XIVe siècle*, Vol. I, pp. 346-47.

This pragmatism is at work, I suggest, in the two lyrics between Adam de la Halle and Jehan Bretel. Their location in the manuscripts *Q* and *W*, amongst Adam's *jeux-partis*, contribute to my considering them as a pair; their manuscript presentation suggests an editor keen to reinforce an awareness of Adam's identity as a composer with a coherent corpus. As Huot has pointed out, in most Old French *chansonniers* lyrics are arranged by author: 'individual representation of each trouvère strengthens considerably the sense of distinct poetic identity, and the integrity of the author corpus as a textual entity'.<sup>93</sup>

R1584, 'Sire Jehan, ainc ne fustes partis' and R1066, 'Adan, li quels doit miex trouver merchi' address reputation and its link to the balance between words and actions. They debate which of two lovers is better, he who remains silent about his love or he who talks about it. 'Adan, li quels' has Jehan ask Adam which of two lovers should be better received by his lady – he who courts her publicly, or he who would rather die than allow his love to be seen. 'Adan, li quels' establishes that the public lover speaks to his lady in the presence of many others, a very different approach from that usually seen in Occitan lyrics ('Ja tant n'i ara de gent', 5, no matter how many others are there). The language used is that of rights and responsibilities: Adam argues that lovers who openly court their lady 'bien font leur devoir' (do their duty well, 10), and that this should lead to comfort and joy:

Et si doivent miex avoir

Confort et alegement (12-13)

And so they really should have comfort and happiness.

---

<sup>93</sup> Huot, *From Song to Book*, p. 57.

The debate focuses on the definition of *amours* and its related value, *mesure* (moderation), which go hand in hand in the truly courtly lover. Adam maintains that true love will overwhelm a lover, prompting him to abandon *mesure* (44) and speak out. Jehan compares the lover to a monk, who does better to pray in silence (stanza five). Each speaker defines *amours* and *mesure* differently, with Jehan taking up the more cerebral, emotional position and Adam arguing for a more open, public courtship. This chimes with Jehan Bretel's position in other *jeux-partis*: he prefers a position which allows him to remain in control of the emotional game with his lady, just as he does here. By refusing to speak, this lover remains at a safe distance, perpetuating a self-reinforcing situation in which the lover / poet can continue to sing to a lady unaware of his emotions. *Amours*, for Jehan, is associated with a discipline which embodies *mesure*; while for Adam, the real definition of *amours* is that *mesure* is abandoned. This topsy-turvy view of love and the relationship between emotion and action can be seen as an acknowledgement of the more inward-looking tradition which emerged from Occitania, which contrasts with Adam de la Halle's vibrant and pro-active approach to courtly love. Adam's argument is that love is a public activity in which a lover can and should abandon normal rules and allow his emotions to be expressed. The move toward a different definition of courtly behaviour – which, of course, places the lady in a completely different situation from that of the distant Occitan *domna* – can be seen as part of an evolving northern tradition shaped by the back and forth of the debate form. While not unknown for a troubadour to advocate speech, this approach certainly chimes with northern French pragmatism.

'Sire Jehan' echoes this dialectic, with the same poets addressing the same topic. As in 'Adan, li quels', Jehan argues that the more discreet lover is the better one;



this time, though, the reward is not the love of the lady but the more general prize of being a better lover – the prize, one presumes, to be awarded by one's peers. This shift from a relationship between the lover and his lady to one which includes the approbation of the lover's peers tips the balance of power yet further in the lover's favour. The move toward a competition in which men define a male lover's superiority pushes the debate into a sphere which is arguably entirely public, with any element of secret emotion lost – aside from that needed to qualify the candidates for the status of lover.

Adam opens the lyric with an acknowledgement of the rules of love, predicating his question on the assumption that a good lover should be rewarded by a just lady, with the economies of exchange echoing those of the religious relationship, where prayer and devotion is rewarded by a merciful God:

Li quiex aime en meillieur foy? (8)

Which one loves in better faith?

Jehan's response, that the better lover is he who remains secret ('se tient coi', 16, who stays silent) is consistent with that adopted in 'Adan, li quels'. His wish to remain apart from his lady, locked in a world of singing to other men rather than interacting with his beloved, sees him espouse a view of love which is determinedly internalised – a view of love on which much of the Occitan corpus is based. Adam's argument is that both *Amours* and *raison* should push a lover to speak out:

N'Amours n'a de taisir loi (24)

Nor does Love have a law of silence.

Dialectic pushes Jehan and Adam to extremes: *Amours* is a tyrant who brooks no argument, forcing each speaker to different ends of the spectrum. Jehan's lover remains entirely silent – not even allowing his silence or his singing about silence to act as a messenger. His world is internal, silent, circular, while Adam's position becomes more and more robustly public, with love and reason enjoined as the arbiters of his approach. Dialectic pushes each speaker toward outright opposition, with each stanza picking up allusions or vocabulary from the one before, and redefining it. Stanza one (Adam) asks an open question about love ('Li quiex aime?', 8); stanza two (Jehan) defines love as silence ('que chieus aime trop miex', 12, he who keeps silent loves very well) while introducing the concept of the thinking lover, whose intellect as well as his emotions dictate his behaviour ('qui en pensant', 16, who, thinking). Stanza three (Adam) responds with 'Mais raison a qui bien aime' (20, but he who loves well does so rationally); stanza four (Jehan) argues that love should not be turbulent ('desroi', 26), as love hates any madness ('Car Amours het tout outrage et folie', 29, since Love abhors all wrongdoing or foolishness). Adam, in stanza five, moves on to the qualities of the lover directed by *Amours*, stating that any man who is silent before his lover can be compared to 'clerc couvert de fause ypocrisie' (37, a clerk covered in false hypocrisy), which Jehan responds to by stating that a true lover is more prized than three talkative ones ('Uns fins cremans est plus prisiés tous dis / que li parlans: uns en vaut miex que troi', 43-44, one fearful true lover is more prized, all in, than a talkative one: one of the former is worth more than three of the latter).

This back and forth, as the interlocutors use each response to oppose or nuance the assertions of the previous stanza, allows the lyric to create a picture of two

diametrically opposed lovers. Each speaker uses the unifying image of *Amours* as a third figure within the debate, acting as a fulcrum which both unites and repels the lovers. *Amours* is taken up and defined differently by each speaker, with Jehan describing a scenario in which the silent lover embodies simplicity:

Simplece vaut miex d'effroi (48)

Simplicity is worth more than agitation.

Jehan's approach is one of deceptive simplicity: his wish for silence separates him from the lady and the other lovers, all of whom use language as their means of gaining status, in love and amongst their peers. Jehan's deliberate renunciation of this is an extreme position and also a gamble, leaving him nominally in control but perhaps, in the context of a northern town whose trading status relied on the linguistic skills of its cadre of clerks, not one which would garner approval from his peers. Adam's approach is equally straightforward, and occupies the opposing end of the spectrum: he argues that any true lover should speak out. The debate within this lyric combines several key features of the courtly lyric as espoused by the *trouvères*: an awareness of language and literacy as the route to enhanced status; a homosocial slant, in a lyric arguably addressed to peers rather than the lady; and a more public and practical view of love than that seen in Occitan texts. This public, pragmatic view of love is a distinguishing feature of those debate texts which originate from the tightly-knit trading centre that was twelfth- and thirteenth-century Arras.

The next two lyrics demonstrate a distinctively northern French approach to courtly love. R1230, 'Grieviler, ja en ma vie' and R693, 'Grieviler, un jugement' feature

Jehan Bretel and Jehan Grieviler, and both are recorded in MS *b* (R693 is also in MS *a*). Grieviler wrote nearly thirty *jeux-partis* with Jehan Bretel, and, as in the majority of their debates, Grieviler responds to Bretel's proposition. Reputation and language are the focus of these lyrics: each considers whether reality or words are better. 'Grieviler, un jugement' discusses which of two husbands is worse off – he who constantly suspects his wife of infidelity, or he who knows his wife has been unfaithful, but that her lover has left her so she will never deceive him again. 'Grieviler, ja en ma vie' asks which is more to blame, a lover who boasts of the favours he has enjoyed with his lady, or the lover who boasts of favours he has never received. Both lyrics address the link between words and actions: are words alone evidence of events, and are they more satisfying than actions?

In 'Grieviler, ja en ma vie' Grieviler argues that the lover who has enjoyed his lady's favours is at fault for speaking of them – the implication is that the lady who withholds her favours is to blame if a lover betrays her with boasting:

Qui d'amours got et puis s'en vante ausi  
que li vantans qui sans joie a servi (15-16)

He who enjoys love and then boasts of it too [is worse than] the boaster who has served without joy / reward.

Bretel takes the opposing view, that lying about encounters is worse:

quar en vantant menti (24)

Because in boasting he lies.

The gap between language and reality is pushed further by Grieviler in stanza four, when he asserts that ‘mençonge ne puet durer’ (30, a lie cannot last), but that he who betrays the real pleasure he and his lady have enjoyed by boasting of it lets down both parties (31-32). The two interlocutors dispute whether boasting of or fabricating an experience is worse – Bretel argues that language can create or give reality to an event which has not happened, and that an outright lie is the worse of the two options:

- Grieviler, mieulz se cunchie  
cil qui ment, tres bien le sai (33-34)

Grieviler, he who lies dishonours himself more, I know this well.

Each speaker uses legal terminology, such as ‘droit’ (right, legal, 14) and ‘faulz tesmoing’ (false witnesses, 39), which reinforces the sense that this is a trial, with words themselves – and the intentions behind those words – being arraigned. As Bloch suggests, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw western medieval societies move away from trial by combat or ordeal toward trial based on advocacy and the power of the spoken word to evidence events which those present had not witnessed. This lyric certainly reflects this: ‘The literary performance stood as a sporting version of trial – a ceremonial demonstration of the principles by which the community defined itself, at once the code and the inventory of its most basic values’.<sup>94</sup>

‘Grieviler, un jugement’ has a similar conundrum at its centre, approached from a different perspective. Instead of language describing past events which may or

---

<sup>94</sup> Bloch, *Literature and Law*, p. 3.

may not have happened, this lyric considers how a jealous husband can find the proof to substantiate his suspicions, so that language and future reality can meet. Grieviler argues that the jealous husband who has no proof is the worse off, saying:

Toutans cuid'il c'on li ait tout emblé (38)

He constantly thinks that someone has taken everything from him.

Bretel's response is that while suspicion may hurt, knowledge of betrayal is far worse:

Voirs est que grant dolour sent  
cuers jalous, mais cent tans pis  
a cil ki set k'il ot honte prouvée (22-25)

It is true that a jealous heart feels great pain, but he who knows that he has been shamed has it one hundred times worse.

Bretel also argues that any unsubstantiated jealousy stems from *amisté* (47, love). Again, we have a dilemma over which is more powerful: the thought of an event, the words describing that event, or the proof of the event. The issues discussed in these two lyrics are intimately linked to the topic of language and status, and this in turn links to the way a lover or wife reflects on the man. There is a unique mix of oppositions at work in trouvère lyric: cultural, social, geographical or gendered; Switten argues that that which 'chiefly characterises the thirteenth-century songs in which Old French is used...[is] experimentation, interaction, cross-fertilisation and

transformation of generic types'.<sup>95</sup> The experimentation and transformation – taking up and playing with courtly assumptions, stereotypes or conventions, many of which may have originated in the Occitan debate tradition – is also seen in Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de la Feuillée*. This play was written in the 1270s and, as Symes suggests, it 'exploits the relationship between fiction and fact; the intersecting practices of sacral and secular spaces; the intermingled conventions of courtliness, coarse comedy, community deliberation, and clerical wit; the rich vocabulary of a common stage'.<sup>96</sup>

That the play is embedded in the day-to-day realities of Arras is without doubt – many of its characters' names are those of real people – and their occupation and concerns would have resonated with its audience. The repartee would have been familiar to an audience aware of the *jeu-parti* tradition, and indeed the subject matter, a young man debating whether or not to leave his wife in Arras to take up a new life in Paris to study, is reproduced in one of Adam de la Halle's *jeux-partis*, R1798 ('Adan, vaurriés vous manoir', between Adam and Jehan Bretel). Jehan asks Adam whether he would prefer to leave Arras or stay there for the whole of his life, enjoying riches and the love of a beautiful woman, on the proviso that he could see only her and never leave the town. This echoes the debate in the *Jeu de la feuillée*, in which Adam has to decide whether to leave his wife in the care of his father while he goes to Paris:

---

<sup>95</sup> Switten, *Music and Poetry in the Middle Ages*, p. xiv.

<sup>96</sup> Symes, p. 183.

Sachiés je n'ai mie si chier

Le sejour d'Arras ne le joie

Que l'aprendre laissier en doie (28-30)

You should know that I don't hold the pleasures of life in Arras dearly enough to forego a life of study.

'Adan, vaurriés vous manoir' is a lyric aimed at an audience in the know – much of its humour would be lost on an audience unfamiliar with Adam's play and the poetic persona he created for himself.

The *jeux-partis* transpose the emotional centre of the troubadours into a more practically-focused environment in which the link between courtly dialogue and practical considerations is more clearly drawn. This use of this form to explore and suggest cultural and gender differences within an overarching courtly system is at the heart of the development of the debate tradition during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The ability to take up an interlocutor's points – or reference another lyric – and gloss their meaning gives these lyrics real interest as part of the development of the courtly tradition. The lyrics are able to use language to discuss and define difference, doing so within a common heritage which allows them to balance continuity and difference.

The final section of this chapter will address debate and dialogue about love within twelfth- and thirteenth-century Old French and Occitan narrative texts. Many of these dialogues use *tenso*-like form and content, often deploying dialectic, using forensic terminology, and examining one word or theme in detail. While, as Denoyelle has pointed out, dialogues about love are the exception within narrative



rather than the rule, they nonetheless act as a turning point within the narrative arc of the chivalric hero, providing an insight into the way in which he (and his intended) are perceived within tales which focus on two key themes – love and arms.<sup>97</sup>

### Section Three: Narrative Texts

Narrative texts from this period encompass a variety of genres, including the epic *chansons de geste*, saints' lives, as well as romances. Within the verse romance genre, Arthurian material forms a distinct body of texts, most of which are in Old French and all of which descend from Chrétien de Troyes' seminal romances. The Arthurian verse romance tradition flowered briefly (in terms of written record) according to analysis of the extant manuscript tradition; Chrétien's popularity waned after about 1275, but within the corpus his influence is all-encompassing.<sup>98</sup> As Schmolke-Hasselmann states, 'The expectations of all readers and authors of Arthurian romances in the thirteenth century and beyond are shaped by Chrétien's romances, which embody whole patterns for such expectations'.<sup>99</sup> There is also a rich corpus of non-Arthurian verse romance, the majority of which is in Old French. I will examine Arthurian and non-Arthurian romances, all of which contain dialogue about love, or have love as an exclusive theme. These are the Arthurian romances *Yvain*, by Chrétien de Troyes, and *Jaufre*; the non-Arthurian Old French narratives *Le Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole* and the *Lai de l'Ombre*, and the Occitan romance *Flamenca*.

---

<sup>97</sup> Denoyelle, *Poétique du dialogue médiéval*, pp. 111-17.

<sup>98</sup> See Hult, *Manuscript Transmission, Reception and Canon Formation*, pp. 13-20.

<sup>99</sup> Schmolke-Hasselmann, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, p. 21.

I argue that these dialogues use dialectic to articulate their view of love and that the differences between the Old French and Occitan texts can be linked to their cultural milieux and their date. The Occitan texts, both of which were composed later than those in Old French, can be read as reacting to the earlier texts. For this reason I shall take the Old French texts first, and consider the Occitan romances in the light of these readings.

The acknowledgement of an existing literary tradition – and the texts' play on the cultural assumptions of northern and southern France – is most clearly delineated in those texts punctuated with interpolations. The *Roman de la rose*, for example, features extracts - usually opening stanzas – from 46 songs from a variety of genres; *Flamenca's* dialogue between the heroine and her lover recreates Peire Rogier's lyric 'Ges non puesc en bon vers faillir'. This direct quotation is not seen in *Yvain*, its Occitan counterpart *Jaufre*, or the *Lai de l'Ombre*, which reference courtly characters such as *Tristan*, creating a more oblique intertextuality. Topsfield has argued that Chrétien was aware of troubadour lyric (in particular that of Bernart de Ventadorn and Raimbaut d'Aurenga) and its model of 'duality, depending on a juxtaposition of opposites'.<sup>100</sup> Thus *Yvain*, the original against which *Jaufre* plays, was also reacting against originals in the form of troubadour lyrics. The romances espouse *mesura*, or restraint: aware of the extremes of the lyric and debate forms, they use dialectic within dialogue to advocate a more balanced courtliness than the all-or-nothing approach of the lyrics.

Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* (c.1177), and *Jaufre* (dated to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century) are taken first, as a pair. *Yvain* and *Jaufre* have several

---

<sup>100</sup> Topsfield, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 98.

parallels, which Hunt describes as ‘sly allusions’: neither hero can resist a challenge (and, indeed, can be seen as impetuous); and each relies on a female character to organise their emotional life.<sup>101</sup> The thematic similarity, alongside two different languages, allows comparison of the way each text acknowledges and plays on the contrast between northern and southern courtly culture and the stereotypes associated with each.

*Yvain* is one of several extant Arthurian romances by Chrétien de Troyes.<sup>102</sup> As part of his corpus it contributed to the establishment of a northern French courtly tradition. Yvain is a leading knight of the Round Table who leaves Arthur’s court to avenge his cousin Calogrenant, who has been defeated by the knight of the fountain. Spurred on by the taunts of Arthur’s catty seneschal, Keu, Yvain defeats and kills the knight of the fountain and – with the help of the maid Lunete – replaces him, marrying the lady of the fountain, the widow Laudine. Ostensibly happily married, she grants him permission to leave her for a year so that he can participate in tournaments. He fails to return on time, and her love, as she promised it would, turns to hate. Informed of this, Yvain loses his reason. His journey back toward reason, reputation, civilisation and marriage encompasses a variety of adventures; finally, again with Lunete’s help, he is reinstated as Laudine’s husband.

The scenes which see Yvain become Laudine’s husband, which take place twice (once when Yvain and Laudine first meet, and once when he returns from exile) are narrative turning points, confirming Yvain’s place in the hierarchy of love. I consider how dialogue constructs the ‘ideal’ knight, in comparison with the Occitan romance

---

<sup>101</sup> Hunt, *Chrétien de Troyes: Yvain*, p. 20.

<sup>102</sup> Hult dates *Yvain* to 1177; his other extant Arthurian works are *Lancelot ou le chevalier de la charrette*; *Erec et Énide*; *Cligès*; and *Perceval*.

*Jaufre*, and I use this extract again in Chapter Four, where I focus on Laudine's autonomy as she negotiates for her next husband. These scenes involve debate between three characters (Yvain, Lunete and Laudine), and play on gender and the nature of *fine amour*. This triangulation (one knight, two female characters) gives the debates an unusual dimension, with the maid Lunete playing the pivotal, matchmaking role seen in some of the lyrics examined above. Chrétien uses dialectic – contrasting love and hate – playing with the link between love and language and language and identity, and how love manifests itself. This latter point – how love is evidenced, and how it can be tested or proved – is key, sitting at the centre of dialogues which rely on a forensic framework. The tension between words, actions, and emotions, and the search for a balance between the competing demands of *clergie* and *chevalerie*, is also inscribed in the text's wider narrative arc.<sup>103</sup> The role of dialectic in *Yvain* has been highlighted by Hunt,<sup>104</sup> who argues that it underlies the structure of the entire text; that 'dialectical and syllogistic reasoning is incontrovertibly present in Laudine's imaginary argument with the slayer of her husband, in Yvain's ratiocination on how he may love his enemy and the narrator's presentation of the paradox of love and hate in the combat of Yvain and Gauvain'.<sup>105</sup> As Hunt argues, dialectic and opposition pervade the structure and content of this text – particularly with regard to the issue of identity and recognition, an issue central to the text and to these dialogues.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> See Bloch, 'Money, Metaphor, and the Mediation of Social Difference in Old French Romance' pp. 20, 28, and 31 for a discussion of the Old French romance as the locus of debate on conflicting generic and social order.

<sup>104</sup> Hunt, 'The Dialectic of *Yvain*', pp. 285-99; and 'Aristotle, Dialectic', pp. 95-129.

<sup>105</sup> Hunt, 'Dialectic of *Yvain*', p. 285.

<sup>106</sup> Hunt, 'Dialectic of *Yvain*', p. 289.

The first exchange, between Laudine and Lunete, has Lunete present her case forensically ('plait si longuement', 1801). She uses dialectic to persuade Laudine of Yvain's merits as a husband. Lunete is described as 'brete' (1580), endowed with Breton cunning; she presents Yvain as the right man for Laudine, despite Laudine's obvious grief, and her motivation is described (ironically given Yvain's behaviour) as that of a 'loiaus amie' (loyal friend, 1748). Her external audience (but not her internal audience, Laudine) is aware of her debt to Yvain for his kindness – again, prompting irony when Laudine is convinced by Lunete's arguments ('Que droit senz et raison i trueve', 1774, she finds good sense and reason there). Lunete's dialectic contrasts a dead husband with a living replacement, a winning knight with a defeated one. Advising her lady out of 'onnour' (honour, 1596), her 'honourable' intentions are contrasted with Laudine's perceptive accusation of lying ('Ains tel menchange ne deïs', 1608, you have never spoken such lies). Throughout this sequence Chrétien establishes a link between language, truth and love, one interpreted differently by each feminine voice. These differing interpretations mean that the triangulated debates take place twice: first between Lunete and Laudine, establishing one version of the truth, then between Laudine and Yvain, establishing another version of it. This tension between language and truth is epitomised by the dialogue's two meanings – addressing love and the defence of the fountain. The narrator is clear that Laudine only considers Lunete's points out of concern for the fountain:

Mez la dame toute nuit out  
 A li meïsme grant tençon,  
 Qu'ele estoit en grant cuisenson  
 De sa fontaine garantir (1734-38)

But the lady debated fiercely with herself all night, because she was very concerned to secure her fountain.

The narrator explicitly references the language of debate (*tençon*, 1735), articulating what each character is doing: weighing up the pros and cons of the situation, so as to arrive at the truth. This vocabulary emphasises the layers of debate: within each character's mind, between the female characters, between Yvain and Laudine or Lunete, and on a broader scale, between knights and clerks. Concern for the fountain's defence, alluded to by Lunete earlier in the sequence, is sandwiched between two dialogues – between Yvain and Lunete and between Yvain and Laudine – which focus on love and its effects. Yvain is named; Laudine's response to news of his identity, that 'n'est mie villains' (he is not at all a peasant, 1816), reveals her concern with identity and class. The change from murderous enemy to eligible suitor hinges on his identity as much as his prowess and her need for a capable knight.

The final dialogue, where marriage is agreed, requires Yvain and Laudine to balance the competing tensions of *amour* and *chevalerie* in a *tenso*-like dialogue. In a humorous touch, Yvain's ability to articulate his feelings is questioned at the start of the scene, with him unable to speak to Laudine and chastised by Lunete for his silence. His behaviour suggests a knight whose prowess in the field is not matched by his eloquence (reinforced by his need for Lunete as his advocate), and this thought is balanced by the close of the scene, which sees Laudine end the dialogue with her key question:

- Et oseriez vous entreprendre

Pour moy ma fontaine a deffendre? (2035-36)

And would you dare to take on the defence of my fountain, on my behalf?

The structure of the dialogue reinforces the content: both rely on dialectic to function. The conventional theme of a lover at risk of death is referenced here, with discussion of Yvain's possible death at Laudine's hands (1977-96); but in this debate, Chrétien has taken the topos of a distant lady who holds her lover's life in her hands and transposed it to a new context. Here, the implications of love and language on *chevalerie* are very real, as is Laudine's ability to dispose of the knight who professes to love her and wishes to obey her every command.

Yvain's defence – that he did no wrong in fighting against an aggressor – is followed by his contention that love dictates his obedience to Laudine, in a chain which leads from her beauty, to his eyes and then his heart. Yvain takes up Laudine's life / death tension in his peroration, saying:

En tel que pour vous, a delivre,

Veil, c'il vous plaist, mourir ou vivre. (2033-4)

Such that for you, without hesitation, I would like, if it pleases you, to live or die.

The themes running through this dialogue – chivalry, language, identity and deceit – are more pronounced in the couple's reconciliation at the end of the narrative. The reconciliation superficially resolves the dialectic used in the dialogues, offering Yvain the opportunity to embody the perfect knight, perfectly poised between love and valour, truth and lies, quest for identity and resolution. This new balance is

undermined by Lunete's earlier reassurance to Yvain that he will be reinstated as her husband exactly as before:

Que tout ainsi comme ele seut

lert vostre dame et vous se sire (6676-77)

That just as she was, she will be your lady and you her lord.

In a play on truth and identity, Yvain is known only to Laudine as the *chevalier au lion* (6704-6). Eventually, Lunete identifies him as Yvain, her husband (6732-48). Laudine's lawyerly concern with avoiding perjury ('Et se ne fust de parjurer / trop laide chose et trop vilaine', 6758-9, and if committing perjury was not something too villainous and unpleasant) is ironic in the face of her interlocutors' disregard for truth: both dialogues have taken place on the basis of false evidence.

These two examples give an unflattering view of chivalry. Yvain is suggestible and tongue-tied; a knight whose only talent is fighting and who needs an advocate to manage him into love: in the clerical world of debate and language he can only parrot its dialogue, guided by Lunete. Love is a means to different ends for Laudine and Yvain – status, physical security, ostensible balance – with identity a moveable feast in a world where language is freighted with different meanings for different speakers. Each speaking pair searches for their own particular truth through continuous dialectic. That said, Yvain is not a figure of fun, despite elements of humour. There is no brake on the humour, however, in *Jaufre*, the only Occitan Arthurian romance. By an anonymous author of Catalan origin, who was aware of Chrétien's works, its eponymous hero voyages through an Arthurian world very



different from that seen in *Yvain*.<sup>107</sup> Written from a different linguistic and cultural background, the text demonstrates awareness of the northern courtly tradition, and an ability to parody its concept of Arthurian chivalry. As Jewers puts it, 'On all narrative levels, the construction of *Jaufre* points to the systematic debunking of the very mechanism of courtly adventure, and its banalization'.<sup>108</sup>

*Jaufre* begins with the traditional Arthurian court scene: Arthur refuses to eat until a Pentecost adventure has taken place. As Fraser outlines, parody and humour are woven through the text.<sup>109</sup> Keu grumbles and Arthur is determined to ignore his (sensible) suggestion that they eat:

"Qexs, per enuig", a dit, "fus natz

E per parlar vilanamens" (144-5)

'Keu, you were born,' he said, 'to complain and speak villainously.'

Each character (and the entire genre) is parodied for comic effect: Arthur is the impotent head of an inferior court, attacked by a fantastical beast while his hapless knights look on (363-68); Keu is the catalyst for *Jaufre*'s adventures, and his reputation for a sharp tongue means he is sidelined, whether or not he speaks wisely.<sup>110</sup> *Jaufre*, who leaves court to avenge the insult to the queen by Taulat (and avenge what he sees as Keu's insult to him), is young, unproven, a knight whose

---

<sup>107</sup> As Huchet has argued, 'le producteur anonyme problématise son rapport à une tradition exogène.' 'Le Roman à nu: *Jaufré*', pp. 92.

<sup>108</sup> Jewers, *Chivalric Fiction and the History of the Novel*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>109</sup> Fraser, 'Humour and Satire in the Romance of "*Jaufre*"', p. 223.

<sup>110</sup> See Martin's definition of parody in *Love's Fools*, p. 15: 'Perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of parody is that it must bear an essential similarity to the original...yet it is not simply imitative. Some basic element must be altered so that the resulting incongruity may reveal some weakness in the original'.

default position is thoughtless violence and over-reaction to any perceived slight. Just as Yvain's actions were uncourtly, belying his protestations of adherence to the courtly and chivalric code, so Jaufre's extreme violence does not reflect well on his class. Jaufre's world oscillates between farce (Arthur's court and the incident with the beast), violence (Taulat's torture of Melian) and the fantastic (the inverted underwater world of the fay de Gibel). The gap between *clergie* and *chevalerie*, and between the noble and *bourgeois* classes, is highlighted throughout the text; in this world of oppositions, the beast who upsets Arthur's court (and repeats this at Jaufre's wedding feast as a bird) is in fact a magician who is well-versed in the liberal arts, and who is fulfilling a wager with Arthur:

E sap tots los encantamens

E las .vij. arts qe son escrichas,

Trobadas, ni feitas ni dichas (446-48)

And he knows all the enchantments and the seven arts which are written, found, talked of and done.

Learning and letters intervene in the world of chivalry, upending it and prompting adventures which reveal the latter's redundancy; not only this, but as Fleischman points out, the adventure comes from within the world of chivalry – the knights have been reduced to creating their own adventures to justify their continued existence.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Fleischman, "Jaufre" or Chivalry Askew: Social Overtones of Parody in Arthurian Romance', p. 105.

Jaufre's encounters with his lady, Brunissen, are exaggerated echoes of those in *Yvain*; Jaufre is incapable of speaking to her:

E Jaufre fun si esperdutz

Quan la vi, que non sap qes diga (7704-5)

And Jaufre was so overwhelmed when he saw her that he did not know what to say.

He spends his nights thinking of verbal sallies, forgetting them on awakening (7721-22); his appearance is useful to Brunissen, who wishes to end the torture imposed by Taulat:

Seiner Jaufre, vostra venguda

Nos a nostra joia creguda (7741-42)

Lord Jaufre, your arrival has increased our joy.

The next section of dialogue sees Jaufre declare his hand; like *Yvain*, he is clear that his lady has complete power over him. Conforming to courtly *topoi* – with the twist that his stupidity would suggest to an external audience that he is mouthing the correct words, rather than experiencing real emotion – the humour in Jaufre's suit comes from repetition – 'vos' is used eighteen times in 26 lines:

Vos est ma mortz, vos est ma vida,

Vos est cella que a desliure

Mi podes far morir o viure (7828-30)

You are my death, you are my life, you are she who can, without hesitation, make me live or die.

Brunissen's response to his declaration is considered, and picks up his courtly language – and the fact that it may just be language, rather than emotion - while pushing Jaufre to define the consequences of his love for her. Opening her response with a wry acknowledgement of his ability to deploy courtly language ('Seiner, ben sabetz escarnir / e gent parlar e plazers dir', 7855-56, Sir, you know well how to deceive, and speak courteously and pleasantly), Brunissen deplores the loss of courtly love (7872-73). She contrasts this generalized loss with her own potential for loyal love, and with Jaufre's fine words, creating a triangular set of contradictions which each interlocutor attempts to resolve via emphasis on love as truth. Brunissen's challenge to Jaufre to love her 'in a courtly way, as you have said' (7865) is a direct response to the way he articulated his love for her. The emphasis on love, truth and transparency runs through the dialogue. Jaufre says he can't hide his love ('nun o deg celar', 7826) and speaks to her without trickery, without lies ('senz engan', 7831, 'senz mentir', 7861); Brunissen says she'll love him without trickery ('senz engan', 7867). Jaufre agrees with her about how love has become degraded ('Domna, ben sai que dreit avetz', 7885, Lady, I know well that you are right), using terminology which reinforces the forensic and performative tone. In comparing themselves favourably with lovers who have drifted from the path of courtly love, equating their feelings with true emotion, Brunissen and Jaufre resolve the dialectic between good and bad love and lovers, while allowing their exchange to operate on a comedic level. Each speaker sticks to the themes most important to them, with their interlocutor reflecting their key concerns. Despite superficial agreement, each defines love differently: Jaufre as something a courtly knight should do – he approaches his wooing with the same enthusiasm we see in his approach to violence – and Brunissen as something which will gain her the

practical defence she needs, in the shape of a knight / lover. Their ulterior motives or the gap between their understanding of love and its reality pushes this scene into parody and irony.

As in *Yvain*, the debate about love is undermined from the start. The external audience knows that Brunissen, like Laudine, has an ulterior motive, having recognised Jaufre's use as a fighter (7152-53). Once the couple have articulated their love, it is she who – like Laudine – suggests marriage, citing the same concern for slander:

“Que voil quem pregatz a moler...

...Senz tot repte de malestar

De lauzengiers contrarios"

(7906, 7910-11)

I would like you to take me as your wife...without being blamed for bad intentions by unpleasant slanderers.

Both romances foreground love and language and how dialectic, on a broad narrative level or within dialogue, can be deployed to suggest truth. Exploiting the medieval love of oppositions, *Yvain* and *Jaufre* explore tensions between love and hate, truth and falsehoods, loyalty and disloyalty, and nobility and bourgeois or villain, to pinpoint the weaknesses in the conventional courtly structure. The Occitan text lampoons the chivalric topos, written as it was at a time of concern with the growing influence of the *bourgeois* in southern France.<sup>112</sup> In both texts, love is juxtaposed with practical need; *Jaufre's* use of comedy and exaggeration to make

---

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, the narrator's monologue on the debasement of chivalric values, lines 2568-2639.

its point about chivalric ideology gives it a humorous slant – when Brunissen states that she'd rather speak out than die of love, her other words remind the reader that love is far from her principal motive (7556-58). Identity, the class system (and the place of nobles and knights within it), and an awareness of the shifting cultural mores of northern and southern France is at the heart of these two texts, which also explore gender roles via feminine characters whose eloquence, cunning, and *courtoisie* allows them to manage their men.<sup>113</sup>

While Arthurian texts present an all-encompassing world, non-Arthurian texts use interpolation and a tone of realism (there are no fantastic interventions, for example) to give them a distinct character. They use lyric quotations to illustrate or undermine their characters' actions and emotions, or as a shortcut to the emotion implicit in a particular genre. This self-consciously literary approach sits in tension with realist narrative, which anchors these texts in the 'real' world (in the case of the *Roman de la rose* [*Rose*], some of the named nobles were real people). As Boulton argues with reference to the *Rose*, the citations from other courtly genres mean 'Jean [Renart] multiplies the authorial voice, in effect creating a lyric chorus to respond to his own narrative voice'.<sup>114</sup> I suggest that, as with the progress from *Yvain* to *Jaufré*, the three non-Arthurian texts I shall examine – all of which date from the thirteenth century – use dialogue to drive intertextual debate on the nature and worth of courtly conventions.

---

<sup>113</sup> See Huchet's argument that 'cet itinéraire métaphorise une descente nord-sud, une occitanisation de la matière de Bretagne dont le "cavalier estrein" est le médiateur', *Jaufré et Flamenca: Novas ou Romans?*, pp. 290.

<sup>114</sup> Barry McCann Boulton, 'Lyric Insertions and the Reversal of Romance Conventions in Jean Renart', p. 88.

I will take Jean Renart's two texts first: both were written in the early 1200s (*Flamenca* dates from the late thirteenth century). It is thought that Jouglet's tale of two perfect lovers in the *Rose* references the *Lai de l'ombre*, an intertextual link unsurprising given their authorship.<sup>115</sup> These narratives feature couples whose relationships are on one level the epitome of courtly love; on another, however, they suggest a variety of difficulties affecting the superficially happy courtly scene. All rely on external signs (in which I include language) as evidence of good faith and so link gesture, language and courtly love in an overarching dialectic affecting the narrative at several levels.

The *Lai de l'ombre* features an unnamed knight of unparalleled valour who has never been in love; *Amors* takes her revenge, and he falls in love with a courtly lady. When he declares his love she rejects him, as she is married and her behaviour should not have encouraged him in any way. During conversation, the knight slips a ring onto her finger; after his departure, noticing the ring, she calls him back and attempts to return it. Instead of accepting it, the knight throws the ring to her reflection in the well by which they are seated, and this gesture prompts the lady to fall in love with him. The tale ends with them united in love.

The description of the knight makes clear his chivalric credentials ('tout ce doit bien chevaliers estre', 111, everything a good knight should be). However, when Love targets him, he moves into the world of courtly dialogue. His sophistry is clear when he tricks his men into discussing the merits of his lady:

---

<sup>115</sup> See Psaki, 'Jean Renart's Expanded Text: Liënor and the Lyrics of *Guillaume de Dole*', p. 124.

Il n'entendent pas a cel dire

Le sofisme qu'il lor fesoit (256-57)

In saying this they did not understand the sophistry he was using on them.

The debate between the lady and the knight, prompted by his unsolicited declaration of love, goes some way toward dismantling the concept of courtly love espoused in courtly lyric (and Ovid, who suggests that when a lady resists the best response is persistence). The lady is adamant that her behaviour was not designed to elicit love, nor does she welcome it:

Je n'entendoie au regart rien,

Se cortoisie non et sens (424-25)

I meant only to show courtliness and sense with my looks.

Furthermore, she says:

Quant cortoisie et biaux samblanz

Nous maine a cortoisie fere,

Lors cuident tout lor autre afere

Cil souspirant avoir trové. (432-35)

When courtliness and friendliness leads us to be courtly, suitors think they have found something entirely different there.

*Cortoisie* is defined as behaviour to which both sexes aspire; however, the feminine definition involves good manners, while the masculine definition equates to love. The dialectic between love and courtesy, words and silent looks ends in impasse



with the knight's departure, having achieved his wish to be her knight for eighteen months. The final dialogue, where the lady falls in love, is prompted by her concern that the gift of the ring will make her his *amie*. This concern with signs and gestures as external marks of emotion echoes her earlier argument; this concern is recognised by the knight, hence his gift, a gesture which will force the lady into submission since onlookers can only interpret it in one way. The emphasis on contraries (the knight and the lady either are or are not lovers) is collapsed in the final scene, in which gestures dominate. The knight throws his ring to the lady's shadow. Acting with 'mout grant sen' (very great sense, 876) – a hint of his clerical cunning, perhaps – throwing the ring away is described as a courtly gesture:

E! Diex, si buen i assena

A cele cortoisie fere! (908-9)

Ah, God, how good he seems, by doing this courtly thing!

This gesture has opened up a third option, moving the dialectic from contraries to contradiction: the knight can keep his ring, give it to the lady, or give it to her shadow. The lady acquiesces; the knight's neat triangulation opens up the binary, only to collapse it again the moment the lady responds. The lady is left back where she began: caught between two poles, the knight's lover or not. Her remark that no man since Adam has had such 'bele cortoisie' (920) is ambiguous; does she mean the courtliness which traps women within masculine assumptions about their behaviour, as she complained earlier in the text, or does she mean a courtliness which acknowledges her words, with this gesture a move away from the constraining dialectic the knight had set out?

The change in the lady's stance opens the text up to differing interpretations: as Kay has pointed out, several are possible: 'Is the *Lai* to be classed as a courtly art of love in a narrative framework, or is it a bourgeois-realist combination of courtly and *fabliau* material? Is the hero exemplary, foolish, or cynical, and is the lady's regard for *bienséances* real or assumed?'.<sup>116</sup> I suggest that the multi-faceted nature of the text is precisely its interest; the commentary on courtly convention lies in the voice given to the lady, an opportunity also given to Lienor in the *Rose*. The lady's take on courtly convention and its gender balance only highlights the humour of her conversion at the end of the narrative, a conversion which relies on one piece of evidence (throwing the ring in the well) as a sign of the knight's feelings.

This link between love and evidence is also at the centre of Jean Renart's *Rose*. It tells of the emperor Conrad, who hears a tale from his minstrel of two perfect lovers (probably those in the *Lai de l'ombre*) and is told that a maiden so perfect does exist. Conrad summons the maiden's brother, Guillaume, to court and they become friends; eventually Conrad and Guillaume agree that Conrad will marry Guillaume's sister Lienor. Conrad's seneschal, jealous of this friendship and aware – through eavesdropping – of Conrad's feelings for Lienor, visits Lienor's mother, and tricks her into telling him about Lienor's rose-shaped birthmark on her thigh. Returning to court, he tells Conrad that Lienor is not the maiden she purports to be and that he has slept with her, citing knowledge of the birthmark to support his allegation. Conrad and Guillaume are devastated, and the marriage is called off. When Lienor learns of this, she goes to court and, via ruse, confronts the seneschal. When he admits he has never seen her before – and a trial by ordeal shows he is telling the

---

<sup>116</sup> Kay, 'Two Readings of the *Lai de l'ombre*', p. 515.

truth – Lienor reveals her identity. Reunited with Conrad and innocent of the seneschal's slanderous claims, the marriage goes ahead.

The *Rose* interpolates 46 songs from different genres, some of which were originally in Occitan. Dated to the early thirteenth century (Psaki and Lejeune date it to c. 1210-12)<sup>117</sup>, Renart's narrative uses the author's awareness of the existing courtly tradition to give space to a feminine voice, playing on cultural and generic stereotypes via interpolation. With the narrative stating that it will tell 'darmes et damors' (of arms and love, 24), dialectic is established as part of the text's structure and plot from the opening lines. Two heroes – Lienor's brother Guillaume and Conrad – each embody one side of this. Guillaume's prowess as a knight helps win Conrad's affections for him and for his sister, while Conrad devotes himself to feasting and the pursuit of love (160-61).

Zink points out that Renart 'quotes songs in such a way as to enrich his text, to complicate the texture of his romance', unlike the *Rose's* imitator, Gerbert de Montreuil's *Roman de la Violette*, which uses interpolated texts as 'a pretext; the romance invites the singing of songs'.<sup>118</sup> This tension undermines the characters from the outset, implying that they aspire to a traditional concept of courtly love without fully understanding how they should behave.

The denouement sees Lienor echo the seneschal's deceit, turning the tables on him: she relies on misleading signs to make her case, which she presents forensically:

---

<sup>117</sup> Psaki, *The Romance of the Rose*, pp. xii-xiv.

<sup>118</sup> Zink, 'Suspension and Fall: The Fragmentation and Linkage of Lyric Insertions in *Le roman de la rose* (*Guillaume de Dole*) and *Le roman de la violette*', p. 119.

Si vos dit selefust aslois

.v.anz toz plains sanz removoir

Ce sachiez de fi et de voir

le ne sai por coi ne coment

Ele peust plus belement

Son claim dire ne son afere (4768-73)

I tell you that if she had been in court consistently for five years, know that truly I don't know how she could have made her claim or her case any better.

Throughout, Lienor's language and emotions are in dialogue with those of the male characters. Despite her need to prove herself innocent, we are told that Lienor thinks only of her brother's pain (5029-31). She identifies herself first as Guillaume's sister, thus restoring his honour:

le sui la pucele a larose

La suer a mon segnor Guillame (5040-41)

I am the maiden of the rose, the sister of my lord Guillaume.

She then confirms her identity as Conrad's betrothed:

Ce sui ge bele lienors (5097)

I am the beautiful Lienor.

Her use of language and dialectic (contrasting language, false identity and truth / falsehood), is synthesized when she identifies herself as Lienor. She is able to resolve the distance between truth and lies created by the seneschal, using

language and its link to signs as her defence: the gaps opened up during the narrative are closed as she identifies herself, reclaiming her position as maiden and love of the emperor Conrad. The binaries open to her (maiden / not maiden; betrothed and honoured / cast off and dishonoured) are acknowledged by her and Conrad as they use speech to reinstate themselves in their desired places in the social and courtly hierarchy. Lienor chooses to reinsert herself into this spectrum by associating her name with truth; as in the *Lai de l'ombre*, it is only through the masculine courtly structure that she can take up a positive position. The brief flurry of feminine speech, which emerges within the masculine world of the court (as aristocratic structure and legal entity) is rapidly subsumed into the existing masculine dialectic, with Lienor returning to silence.

As Kay has argued, Lienor's approach is reminiscent of a *tenso*; she also embodies the career of the women referred to in the *chansons de femme* scattered through the narrative.<sup>119</sup> I agree that, as Krueger has argued, Lienor functions as a sign who 'shore[s] up aristocratic marriage', who uses dialectic within dialogue to establish her place within the courtly system.<sup>120</sup> That this place may be one of two alternatives open to her – virginal wife to Conrad or fallen woman – is of course true, but does not invalidate the point that Lienor is able to mirror masculine and forensic language and use the art of debate and dialogue to reinstate herself as Conrad's betrothed, taking an active role in Renart's courtly construct.

My final text, *Flamenca*, is an Occitan romance written c.1275. I shall examine Flamenca's ability to articulate desire in Chapter Four, but here I concentrate on the

---

<sup>119</sup> Kay, *Subjectivity*, pp. 196-97.

<sup>120</sup> Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender*, p. 130.

text's dialectic which opposes *clergie* and *chevalerie*, courtly and uncourtly behaviour and language, and northern and southern French traditions. Thematically similar to the *Rose* and the *Lai de l'ombre*, *Flamenca's* heroine is an active participant in the text's courtly games. As for Lienor and the lady of the *Ombre*, *Flamenca* uses her linguistic wits to escape a situation not of her own making. However, as I shall argue, *Flamenca* and her ladies are more knowing in their deployment of courtly language, and create a wider feminine space by virtue of their own debates about the nature and meaning of courtly language and emotion. *Flamenca's* approach to *cortoisie* and cultural differences is that of a later text, undermining and questioning the culture it purports to support.

The (incomplete) text opens with *Flamenca* married against her will to Archambaut, a count of Bourbon. Archambaut's jealousy is aroused by the queen telling him the king has fallen for *Flamenca*; jealous, he locks *Flamenca* with her ladies into a tower, only allowing her out to mass. Hearing of her, Guilhem de Nevers – an exemplary and learned knight from Paris – falls in love. To gain access to her, he buys himself a place as assistant to her priest, and the couple start their affair by exchanging one or two syllables every time she takes communion. They meet at the baths, and after a happy courtship *Flamenca* tells Guilhem to return to his life of tournaments: she will be content to hear of his renown. Archambaut finally releases *Flamenca* from her prison, and the text ends with a celebratory Easter feast, attended by the king, queen, and Guilhem.

Despite being a knight, Guilhem has a clerical education (1622-27; 1706-8; 1762-65); his literary expertise places him in a powerful position when it comes to a courtly love affair. Balanced between *clergie* and *chevalerie* (he is an exemplary

knight, 1561-82), he embodies the tension between them but is also their synthesis, epitomizing the both / and of opposition. He is an outsider, coming from northern France to the south, in an Occitan text. Northern French clerical cunning is presented as the winner in the game of love (3819-22; 5204); Flamenca's concern with love is thus undermined by her recognition that Guilhem represents a chance to escape prison (4978-80), and that none of the knights of the south have made any effort to rescue her (5335-51).

Their initial dialogue is a quick-fire exchange which runs: *Ai las – que plans – mor mi – de que – d'amor – per cui – per vos – qu'en pusc – garir – conssi – per gein – pren li – pres l'ai – e qual – iretz – es on – als banz – cora – jorn breu – plas mi.* This exchange sits comfortably within a dialectical frame. It sets out, in miniature, the silence / speech dilemma central to courtly love; it also emphasizes its reciprocal nature. The feminine voice is pushed to 'heal' the masculine simply because he requests it of her, while the tension between speech and physicality is present throughout. Flamenca's personal dialectic operates, as her lady Margarida suggests, on two levels, physical and courtly. Margarida contrasts Flamenca's prisons with that of Guilhem, which is a prison of love ('el non a mais una preiso', 5414). Flamenca's prisons are physical and emotional:

L'una es del marit gilos...

...l'autra es cors e voluntatz (5418; 5421)

One [prison] is that of your jealous husband...the other is of your heart and mind.

She continues, setting out the exact inversion of the two lovers' physical situations:

A lui non sofrain ren mais vos,  
Totz l'autre mons es a sos pros,  
E vos est as secle perduda  
E el a vos car no.us ajuda. (5431-34)

He lacks nothing except you, since the rest of the world is at his disposal; you are lost to the world and he is lost to you since you can't find help.

The dialectic here, flagged in the dialogue Flamenca and her ladies engage in throughout the affair (Flamenca asks Margarida 'Qui t'ensenet...tan de dialectica?', who taught you...so much of dialectic?, 5441-43) works on several levels. The physical situation of each lover mirrors the other in a contrary opposition. However, the emotional situation is more complex, with Flamenca bound by courtliness and Guilhem by Love. Flamenca's prison is one in which another layer of dialectic is at work: language versus truth. Within her world, she must use language to be 'courtly'; in this romance, courtliness is defined as a system regulating love, and one in which trickery abounds. As in *Yvain* and *Jaufre*, Flamenca recognises Guilhem's use from the outset; she says that she will pursue the affair because her heart is Guilhem's:

Quar nostre cors son assas us,  
Mais sol aquil a cui s'atain (5452-53)

Because our hearts have become one – just that one to which I belong.

The hearts to which she refers are hers and those of Alis and Margarida. This neatly collapses the opposition between feminine and masculine, uniting the three ladies in a common goal – using the space between true love and language (in



which courtliness lies) to achieve their wish to be free of a physical and emotional prison. The gap between language and truth typical of those espousing courtliness is underlined at the beginning and end of the text, which feature celebratory court scenes where courtliness is associated with duplicity (937-39; 7145-71; 7377-81).

The shifting ground of *Flamenca* affects how courtly love is conducted and defined; the description of a court in which courtliness has given way to loose morals, and a clerk able to steal the wife of a stereotypical jealous husband from under his nose suggests a text parodying the aspirations of courtly culture but simultaneously dependent on a shared heritage for the lovers to understand each other. A heroine who takes her future into her own hands through debate and dialogue is able to create a love affair based on literary precedent, with *cortoisie* firmly linked to deception and far from the unfulfilled love of the troubadours. Culturally, the depiction of a northern French cleric / knight who uses Occitan verse to dupe his lady's husband suggests that the traditional Occitan concept of courtly love was seen as outmoded, in a world where northern French literacy reigned supreme.

The dialogues in these narratives are knowing, playing on the courtly conventions established in the *tensos* and *jeux-partis*. The theme that emerges is that of a battle between sword and pen, one won by the clerics who composed these texts. Even female characters get the better of knights in debate, using masculine skills such as dialectic to manipulate or manage the situation. Knights are lampooned, their prowess useful only when directed by female characters. The play on cultural stereotypes – northern French cunning versus the old-fashioned, Occitan concept of *fin'amor* as pure, unconsummated love – provided space to debate the emerging social changes, with narratives commemorating a fast-disappearing social class.

## Conclusion

The texts considered in this chapter are united by their use of debate to seek truth. Each text uses debate to define and suggest key courtly terms or conventions; Bec describes ‘antithetical terms [which] coincide in paradox’; he applied this to the poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn, but it can equally be applied to the courtly canon as a whole.<sup>121</sup> Debate texts sat within a literary tradition rich in overlapping themes and intertextuality between individual poets, with debate texts differentiating themselves from the corpus of *chansons* and *cansos* by virtue of their discursive and didactic tone.<sup>122</sup> A broader intertextuality is also apparent in the spread of the courtly lyric from Occitania to northern France, Arras in particular, and England. Geographical movement meant that the *trouvères* composed whilst aware of an earlier body of texts which espouse a view of courtly love which is broadly more idealistic. The *trouvères*’ approach, meanwhile, reflects the concerns of an urban, trading society, and is broadly more pragmatic than that of the *troubadours*.

The link between the two traditions lies in the tension between the *trouvères*’ debt to, and knowledge of, the earlier Occitan corpus, and their wish to differentiate themselves from it. This tension between cultural opposition and continuity can perhaps be seen most clearly in bilingual lyrics (which also witness the reality of cultural contact between *troubadours* and *trouvères*). These lyrics contrast the concerns of the *tensos* – presented as a more emotional, less worldly approach which keeps the lady at arms length – with those of the *jeux-partis*. This latter

---

<sup>121</sup> Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, p. 5, and Bec, ‘L’Antithèse poétique chez Bernard de Ventadour’, pp. 107-37.

<sup>122</sup> Vernay applies this description to the *jeux-partis*, but it can be applied to the *tensos*. See ‘Quelques considérations sur le *jeu-parti* français’, pp. 191-92.

group articulates concerns which centre on marriage, language and status. The trouvères who wrote debate poetry were in many ways a unique and self-reinforcing cultural group, benefiting from the town's wealth, trading status, and concomitant need for a group of literate clerks to serve its business and ecclesiastical interests. The emerging cadre of clerks had a dual function, acting as poets and audience, and writing about issues which concerned them. They acknowledge courtly love as admirable, but do not hesitate to adapt it to a different cultural milieu; the wish to be married, for example, and the problems associated with conjugal love, are regularly raised within the northern courtly tradition.

However, this positive view of the Occitan lyric tradition is not so evident within the narrative texts. These texts – in which the composers had greater formal leeway, with content shaped by narrative movement – take a different view of the courtly tradition. The contrast between northern and southern stereotypes is given greater rein, with both Arthurian and non-Arthurian narratives placing dialectic between *clergie* and *chevalerie*, nobles and *bourgeois*, and northern France and Occitania at their heart. These narratives drew on existing texts to broaden or undermine their characters or to lampoon entire genres. The quest for balance at the heart of the narratives is nonetheless consistently undermined by characters or narrative arcs which suggest a circularity or inability to learn lessons. It is from this reversion to type that much of the implicit humour of the texts emerges.

As I have shown, intertextuality in a variety of forms was central to the debate lyrics; neither troubadours nor trouvères wrote in a vacuum. The debate about the meaning of courtly love and its key terms is evidenced by the size of the corpus, which forms a not insubstantial proportion of the overall courtly tradition, and by the

output of its key proponents. Debate was central to medieval life, crossing theology, literature, and law. The crossover of law and literature, in particular, is clear: a forensic approach and vocabulary is deployed within debate across genres. The legal language of rights and responsibilities is apposite within Arras, based as it was around an emerging trading culture which brought with it a legal industry, and is also apposite within a feudal context, in which a vassal can articulate the rights his *seigneur* owes him, reflected in their mutually beneficial oaths of allegiance.

Debate, then, allows courtly poets to explore and suggest difference and similarity in a form which enables opposition as part of a courtly framework. That the troubadours and trouvères enjoyed the use of dialectic, whether within one lyric or within a broader context, is clear. Intertextuality, and the effect of differing cultural milieux, is a seam which runs through debate within lyric and narrative texts, with each genre taking up the approach of its predecessors or contemporaries and adapting them to their own particular cultural concerns. The dialogue within the narratives takes up the debate conventions established in the *tensos* and *jeux-partis*, allowing lyric to inform narrative in a broad intertextual relationship. This adaptation allows a continuous process of change, with each composer shaping and suggesting, through the back and forth of debate, new or amended truths at the heart of courtly love.

## Chapter Two

### Silence and Secrecy

#### Introduction

This chapter considers silence and secrecy. Across debate lyrics and narrative monologues, silence and secrecy is a recurring theme; I will argue that it is relevant to dialogue not just thanks to its ubiquity as a theme, but because it cuts to the heart of dialogue as a form.

Articulating one's emotions is central to courtly love. However, secrecy is also vital, through keeping knowledge of one's secret love away from the object of one's affection, or keeping any knowledge of a love affair away from those around the couple: as Lazar puts it, 'La première règle de l'amour courtois est la discrétion absolue'.<sup>123</sup> Courtly literature starts from this tension: silence and secrecy are vital, but are essentially an oxymoron, since they are central to literature which cannot exist unless one of the lovers sings about their emotions, breaking their adherence to the tenets they espouse so vigorously. The courtly canon emerges from this basic tension, which forms a framework within which other tensions can operate. Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* recommends that love should be 'preserved secret from all', yet no poet can possibly follow this rule.<sup>124</sup> Secrecy is vital to courtly love because the love should be between the poetic voice (almost always masculine) and an unobtainable lady, usually married. Courtly love is therefore almost always by definition adulterous; so secrecy becomes, in many courtly scenarios, vital if the

---

<sup>123</sup> Lazar, *Amour Courtois et "Fin'Amors"*, p. 177.

<sup>124</sup> Capellanus, *De Amore*, Book Two, Chapter One.

aspiring lover is not to be ostracised in a society which espoused the sanctity of marriage.

I suggest that this tension between speech and silence is heightened when the poetic form includes more than one voice. In other words, the use of silence and secrecy within a debate or dialogue context makes the contrast between the theme and the form itself yet more pointed. When two voices discuss silence and / or secrecy, their transgression of the requirement to remain discreet moves from implicit to explicit, making the courtly scenario highly paradoxical. As Spearing has argued, drawing on the work of Miller:

More important, perhaps, is the value attached to secrecy itself in a world where privacy was difficult to achieve. Secrecy may be seen specifically as a means of heightening erotic pleasure...More fundamental still is the general claim made by D. A. Miller for secrecy as the guardian of private experience. Referring to the representation of subjectivity in the novel, he observes that 'secrecy would seem to be a mode whose ultimate meaning lies in the subject's formal insistence that he is radically inaccessible to the culture that would otherwise entirely determine him'.<sup>125</sup>

I argue that the thrill of secrecy, its impact on erotic pleasure and its use as a means of resistance is central to courtly literature, that breaking this silence brings a further layer of pleasure, and that the debate form creates and prolongs this pleasurable circular discussion – as summarised by Gally's neat description: '*Tenso*

---

<sup>125</sup> Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, pp.20-21.

et *jeu-parti* posent une question sans pouvoir donner de réponse et ainsi la font résonner sans fin dans le cercle des courtois'.<sup>126</sup>

The lyrics tend to use silence and secrecy, sometimes conflating the two themes, to signify expertise. Silence and secrecy here can be linked to control – not only can the poet control language and its effect, he can also control how silence is perceived by his audience. This use of silence and secrecy creates a poetic voice who appears experienced and at ease with language, love, and silence. Within narrative texts, silence and secrecy's connotations shift, and the different implications of silence and of secrecy are clearly marked. Narratives frequently use dialogue about secrecy to signal characters' inexperience. No longer the marker of the sophisticated lover, silence signifies an inexperienced lover, unable either to recognize or communicate their own feelings. Silence has moved from a choice to a trap. Secrecy, on the other hand, is linked to experienced lovers aware that discretion will guarantee their love. Secrecy is, of course, depicted as the precursor to an almost inevitable revelation which destroys the affair's delicate balance. As Gaunt points out, while the lyrics maintain the anonymity of the lady, leaving her either unnamed or using a *senhal* or code name, the narrative treatment of secrecy is complicated by the intrusion of a narrator, a plot, and identification of characters. Narratives' reliance on 'the forward movement of time...inevitably entails the betrayal of any secret love, and the implication of the readers or listeners in that betrayal, since the substance of the text is the narration of the secret'.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>126</sup> Gally, 'Entre sens et non sens', p. 227.

<sup>127</sup> Gaunt, *Love and Death*, p. 76.

The chapter will examine these differing treatments of silence and secrecy. I will consider how the link between silence and control is deployed to exploit or point up differences in the way that gendered voices approach silence and secrecy, how silence can communicate humour and irony, either in support of or to the detriment of a poetic voice or character, and how silence and secrecy relate to control over language and by extension over courtly love itself.

The corpus examined consists of the *tensos* 'Segner Coines, jois e pretz et amors' and 'N'Elyas, de dos amadors'; the *jeux-partis* 'Bons rois Thiebaut' and 'Adan, li quels doit miex trouver merchi'; Guilhem IX's *vers* 'Farai un vers pos mi somelh'; and the narrative texts *Lanval*; the *Roman d'Enéas*; *Cligès*; the *Chasteleine de Vergy*; *En Aquel Temps c'om era gais*; and the *Roman de Silence*.

### **Section One: Occitan Lyric**

This section considers Occitan lyrics: two *tensos* and a *vers* (a single-voice lyric) containing elements of dialogue. The three lyrics (PC 392.29 = 116.1; PC 52.4 = 131.1; and PC 183.12) are part of the courtly tradition which began with the work of Guilhem IX, the author of the *vers* I will consider. The earliest recorded troubadour, composing between the late eleventh century and 1126, Guilhem introduces themes echoed in the rest of the courtly canon, giving his use of silence versus speech particular pertinence. The two *tensos* considered were composed c.1200.<sup>128</sup> Each of these lyrics suggests silence is a means of communication; the way that silence is interpreted becomes key to the dialogue they contain.

---

<sup>128</sup> Harvey and Paterson, pp. xl-xliv; they date PC 52.4 = 131.1 to c. 1200, and PC 392.29 = 116.1 to 1204-7.



'Farai un vers' (PC 183.12) features a masculine poetic voice who tells of his amorous encounter with two women.<sup>129</sup> The encounter is predicated on the ladies' belief that he is mute – something they test by scratching him with a cat. Once through this test, the protagonist spends eight days having sex with them. Dialogue is seen in the initial meeting between lover and ladies, when their questions meet with nonsensical babble; and when the extra-textual audience is told of dialogue between the ladies.

The lyric's bawdiness and opacity has attracted critical attention; I will focus, however, on its use of dialectic and dialogue.<sup>130</sup> The opening stanza establishes a dialectic between *clergie* and *chevalerie*:

Donna non fai pechat mortal  
Qe ama cavalier leal,  
Mas si es monges o clergal  
Non a raizo! (6-9)

A lady does not commit a mortal sin who loves a loyal knight, but if it is a monk or a priest she is in the wrong!

From the outset this lyric is framed by opposition between two masculine stereotypes, suggesting that the poetic voice is concerned with how a courtly lover is perceived and defined by other men. Already, then, the lyric points toward a

---

<sup>129</sup> Guilhem IX or Guilhem de Peitieu was probably alive between 1071 and 1126; see *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, p. 285. Version and translation cited is Bond, ed., *The Poetry of William VII*.

<sup>130</sup> See Huchet, *L'Amour discourtois*, pp. 91-100.

conversation between and for the benefit of men. Reading the lyric in this way gives it specific connotations: the lyric becomes part of a dialogue with a masculine extra-textual audience; the masculine protagonist's use of silence and dialogue is linked to power, with the choice between silence and speech a calculated one designed to increase the poetic voice's control over his position in the courtly hierarchy. The play on silence, speech and power, as well as the *clergie* versus *chevalerie* dialectic and the question of the poetic voice's audience are all points which complicate the dialogue. These elements will be seen repeatedly in lyrics by later troubadours and trouvères; this lyric is therefore of interest in and of itself, and as a template against which one can read lyrics and narratives which take up this theme later in the courtly tradition.

The lyric condemns the corrupting nature of some women's love ('Donnas i a de mal conselh / E sai dir cals', 3-4, There are ladies who are ill-advised, and I can say which). Establishing the ill-intent of some women, the poetic voice moves smartly to the fact of his encounter with two married women:

Trobei la moiller d'en Guari

E d'en Bernart (15-16)

I came across Lord Warren's wife and Lord Bernart's.

The use of the verb *trobar* (to find) implies a poetic voice in complete control – he literally found or created his female characters, and will now describe how he maintained that control through his mastery of language, silence, and visual cues. The dialogue between the narrative voice and the ladies begins with their addressing him, labeling him 'don pelerin' (20, Sir Pilgrim), and describing him as

'de belh aizin' (21, from fine surroundings). They do so thanks to his dress (he walked 'totz sols a tapi', 14, all alone, in pilgrim's guise), so from their first encounter his appearance, with no language needed, misleads; it also links his poetic character with the clerical side of the *clergie* versus *chevalerie* divide. The response from the masculine voice differs in tone. It invokes an extra-textual audience, and its babbling moves the poetic voice away from the articulate cleric suggested by the ladies' greeting:

Ar auzires c'ai respondutz

Anc no li diz ni ba ni butz,

Ni fer ni fust no ai mentagutz,

Mas sol aitan:

"Babariol, babarial,

Babarian." (25-30)

Now you will hear what I answered: I never said "bah" or "boo" to her, and didn't mention "iron" or "wood," but only this much: "Babariol, babarial, babarian."

This nonsensical reply prompts dialogue between the two ladies:

"Trobat avem qe anam qeren;

Sor, per amor Deu l'alberguem,

Qe ben es mutz,

E ja per lui nostre conseilh

Non er sabutz." (32-36)

We have found what we are looking for; Sister, for the love of God let us give him lodging, for he is indeed mute and our secret will never be known through him.

At this stage silence is sought by each of those speaking, for differing reasons: the masculine poetic voice feigns lack of control over language (he says he is 'mutz'), and the ladies explicitly pursue him because of this. The dialogue exposes differing levels of control: the extra-textual audience is aware that the masculine voice is dictating the terms of the exchange since he chooses between speech and silence, and sets the dialogue within the lyric in the framework of a conversation with his (masculine) peers. As Kendrick points out, 'their "deaf-mute" can write and send messages. What is worse, he can sing the story of his near-martyrdom'.<sup>131</sup> The gap between the reality of the masculine voice's silence and the perception expressed in the ladies' dialogue skews the power balance from the start. The poetic voice's visual cues are clerical, as is his dialogue within the lyric and with his extra-textual audience, but his actions are those of a knight.<sup>132</sup> The message one can draw from this tension between masculine types is that without a cleric's guile and linguistic control, a knight could not succeed in the game of love.

After taking him home with them, the ladies question their interpretation of his silence:

"Sor, s'aquest hom es enginhos,  
Ni laissa a parlar per nos,  
Nos aportem nostre gat ros  
De mantenent,  
Qe.l fara parlar az estros

---

<sup>131</sup> Kendrick, *The Game of Love*, p. 132.

<sup>132</sup> See Topsfield, *Troubadours and Love*, pp. 16-18 for a discussion of the clerk v knight opposition.

Si de re.nz ment."

(49-54)

Sister, in case this man is being crafty and has only left off talking because of us, let us bring in our russet cat right now, for it will quickly make him talk if he is lying to us about anything.

They scratch him with their cat; the masculine voice passes the ladies' test, and tells his audience that he 'would not have moved my tongue at all' (71, 'mas eu non mogra lengua ges'). The ladies react as he wants them to:

So diz n'Agnes a n'Ermessen:

"Mutz es, qe ben es conoissen;

Sor, del bainh nos apareillem

E del sojorn."

(73-76)

Lady Agnes said to Lady Hermessen: 'He is mute, as is easily seen; Sister, let us prepare ourselves for dalliance and pleasure'.

The dialogue in this lyric shows how silence can be an unstable sign, allowing differing interpretations. While the ladies get what they want on one level – they have found a man whose prowess in the bedroom is that of a virile knight, and who remains silent throughout – on another level their (mis)interpretation has disastrous consequences, precisely because the poetic voice is able to use silence to blur the tension between what Cholakian describes as his 'split personae', leaving him able to revert to clerical type and recount the episode as part of a conversation with his masculine peers.<sup>133</sup> The ladies enter the tryst on the assumption that it will remain secret, which is exploded when the masculine persona the ladies have overlooked

---

<sup>133</sup> Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading*, pp. 14-28.

composes his lyric about their activities. The very act of speaking, from the first stanza, breaks the compact the ladies thought they had made, and invokes a dialogue with an audience of which only the masculine poetic voice is aware.

The emphasis on silence and secrecy as a means to power seen in 'Farai un vers' is also central to 'Segner Coines, jois e pretz et amors' (PC 392.29 = 116.1) and 'N'Elyas, de dos amadors' (PC 52.4 = 131.1). These two *tensos* focus on silence, secrecy, and reputation reflects a broader preoccupation within the debate lyric corpus, but contains a different perspective from that of 'Farai un vers'.<sup>134</sup> In these lyrics silence is associated with suffering, and the poetic voices discuss silence as a tool for courtly love rather than demonstrating its use in action.

'Segner Coines, jois e pretz et amors' asks who is the better lover – the talkative or the silent man – while 'N'Elyas, de dos amadors' takes a slightly different approach, asking which lover is more in love. Each lyric concentrates on a masculine approach to love, with the lady acting as a prompt for and silent witness to this love, but one who is sidelined by the speaking voices. The circular nature of the lyrics (the poetic voice discusses silence but in doing so breaks his silence, and so on) and the lady as a silent catalyst for speech are emphasized by the paradox of two voices speaking about silence; this paradox dominates the lyrics.

---

<sup>134</sup> 11 *tensos* (7% of the corpus) and 15 *jeux-partis* (9% of the corpus) address silence and secrecy exclusively, with other lyrics touching on this theme.

In 'Seigner Coines' two masculine voices debate which of two equally reputable lovers the lady should choose.<sup>135</sup> One lover is so fearful that he does not tell his lady of his feelings, while the other does. They debate whether the lady should be able correctly to interpret the silent lover's sighs as signs of love, or whether the more worthy path is for a lover to articulate his emotions; the conflict between measured, prudent emotion and the excesses of an extreme love which directs the lover's actions is a familiar one within courtly literature.<sup>136</sup> The masculine voices reference external arbiters – 'jois et pretz et amors' (1, joy and worth and love) – suggesting that lovers compete for the prize of being the better lover or the better debater in a system regulated by external agents. This nod to an external framework is the first hint that the poetic voices' dialogue is aimed at audiences other than their ostensible target, their lady – a theme which will emerge more strongly as the lyric progresses.

Raimbaut argues that the fearful lover understands love's ways, and that his sighs will make his request for him:

Car cel que tem sap d'amor son usage  
 E tramet li fin'amor per message :  
 Si no la enqer, enqerran la.l sospir  
 Lo ben q'eu qer faz ma domna.m merir (22–25)

---

<sup>135</sup> Harvey and Paterson, pp. 1092-94, attribute this lyric to Raimbaut de Vaqueiras and Conon de Béthune, dating it to between 1204 and 1207, with the two troubadours having met on the Fourth Crusade.

<sup>136</sup> Andreas Capellanus, for example, explored 'amor sapiens'; see also Kelly's *Medieval Imagination*, pp. 96-100, which addresses imagination, personification, and forms of courtly love.

For the one who is fearful understands love's ways and sends his beloved true love through a messenger: though he does not beseech her his sighs will make his request for him. The favour I seek, I cause my lady to bestow on me!

The masculine voice's sighs signify *fin'amor*. This is explicitly linked, later in the lyric, to his trust in his lady's ability to recognize the significance of this silence:

Que cel que qer no se fida en lauzors

Ni en sa dame ni el ben que.il fai (36–37)

The man who asks for what he wants places no trust in singing a lady's praises nor in his lady herself nor in the good he does.

There is a real sense of threat in this power game: the lady must recognize the meaning of silence or she will no longer be his lady, and the quality of his singing and his position within the courtly hierarchy could be questioned. The link between language, silence and power is explicit: if the lover can control language, silence, and his lady's reaction, he will be able to control his courtly persona. As in 'Farai un vers', the onus is on a feminine third party to interpret masculine signs; the crucial point is that these signs are discussed before an implicit audience of masculine peers, ensuring that dialogue takes place on two levels: with his lady and with other masculine lovers. Love, silence and language are explicitly linked by Raimbaut, who ends the lyric with the assertion that 'Qe d'amor eu me sai' (35, but about love I know more than you). In comparison with Raimbaut's confidence in his control over language and silence, Conon asserts that a fool would keep silent, since a lady can only cure her lover of his sickness when she is aware of the situation:



Certes, Raimbaut, lo taser es folors:

Se ge ne qer merce, per qe l'avrai? (9-10)

For sure, Raimbaut, it is folly to keep silent: if I do not ask for favour, how shall I ever have it?

What stands out here is perhaps the crux of the lyric, in which two masculine voices discuss silence, secrecy, and their approach to their lady. Conon is clearly advocating a dialogue about *merce* with his lady, and yet he does so not in dialogue with her but with another man. The paradox of speaking in dialogue about silence is highlighted by this reference to requesting *merce* through dialogue with the lady, which comes in the context of masculine – masculine dialogue. It seems that the poetic need for speech and dialogue is fulfilled by a conversation with one's masculine peer group; further, that this sort of homosocial context is preferred to any conversation with the lady in question, who is given the role of silent catalyst, allowing the masculine voices endlessly to discuss the merits of speech versus silence.

A similar scenario is set out in 'N'Elias'.<sup>137</sup> This lyric discusses two lovers, one of whom talks about his lady to all and sundry, while the other only 'gazes into his heart night and day' (7, 'mas en son cor remira nuev e dia') considering how best he might serve her. It asks who is more in love. In this lyric, control of love is linked with control over language, leaving the silent lover at what at first appears to be a distinct disadvantage.

---

<sup>137</sup> See Harvey and Paterson, p. 130 for discussion of the identity of 'N'Elias' with Elias d'Uisel; they date this lyric to 'around the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> c.' if Elias is indeed Elias d'Uisel.

Each lover is described as suffering for love, and as in the previous lyric, this suffering equates to an expectation of reward from their lady. Elias gains solace in speech:

En Bernat, pus destrenh amors  
L'amic que non a nulh cofort  
S'en parlan no.s dona conort (10-12)

Sir Bernart, love has more power over the lover who has no solace unless he consoles himself by speaking.

Thus speech leads to happiness, but – as in ‘Segner Coines’ – it is unclear whether this will be between two masculine voices, or the lover and his lady. Even the view that secrecy is better is still subject to discussion between two masculine voices:

Per que.m par c'am mielhs ses enjan  
Sel que son joi jauzis selan (22-23)

That is why it seems to me that the man who rejoices secretly in his joy is the better, more sincere lover.

For the silent lover, speechlessness signifies total subjection to an external force which overrides the subject's ability to control language, negating his ability to talk to his lady, although this clearly does not impede dialogue with his peers. Bernart advocates silence:

Que be sabetz que ren tan no.l plairia

Co si de leys ses dan parlar podia

Mas tan ama per que dopta falhir

C'amors no.l giec de parlar enardir (24–27)

For you can be sure that nothing would please him so much as to be able to speak of her without doing harm, but he is so much in love that he is fearful of behaving wrongly, for love does not allow him to be so bold as to speak out.

Secrecy is something to be treasured on one's own and shared only with one's peers, albeit in a state of fear ('car amors l'a tan ferm lassat / que non auza dir mal ni be', 39-40, for love has him so firmly in its snare that he dare not speak well or ill [of his lady]). There is real paradox in Bernart breaking his silence to argue in favour of suffering in silence and keeping the joy and pain of love to oneself. The effect of debate about silence and secrecy is, I suggest, a sense that these masculine voices have absolute control over love. The dialogue addresses the terms and conditions of courtly love, and it is the external signs of internal emotion that dictate which of the two models is better. What counts, for these two lovers, is how other men will judge their actions (and emotions), rather than their lady. The lady is a catalyst for an entirely masculine process, allowing them to debate the mechanics behind the feelings.

The power play within this lyric shows silence associated with loss of control and exclusion; if silence and secrecy are central to courtly love, then so too is breaking that silence with one's peers to negotiate one's position in the courtly hierarchy. The competition between two masculine voices puts this position at stake; the prize is an ability to manipulate one's own position within a world created and defined by

masculine speech and language. Silence equates to a void, with neither masculine voice able to create a space for himself outside (courtly) language. There is of course irony and humour in advocating silence through speech, but what comes across most clearly is the paradox of the dialogue frame and its content, and the use of silence and secrecy as a means to power and as a means of regulation.

If power for the troubadours lies in the ability to debate courtly love with peers, for the northern French trouvères silence and secrecy have a slightly different emphasis. The *jeux-partis* use silence and secrecy to focus on reputation; the concept of a dialogue with the lady is even more peripheral than in the *tensos*. The *jeux-partis*' focus on reputation and position leads to emphasis on correct procedure, with a sense of nostalgia threading through the Old French lyrics as the trouvères hark back to an archetype against which they measure themselves.

## **Section Two: The Trouvères**

The trouvères' composition was influenced by place and timing, and this awareness of tradition and corpus informs the Old French lyrics.<sup>138</sup> They ask more frequently than the Occitan lyrics what 'a courtly lover' would do. This aspiration, alongside the practicalities of reputation management, defines the *jeux-partis*, which use silence and secrecy in distinct ways.

The two *jeux-partis* I consider debate which of two lovers is the better, judged according to their ability to stay silent and keep love a secret. They are 'Bons rois

---

<sup>138</sup> Bloch, *Literature and Law*, p. 152; Symes, pp. 216-27; and Gally, *Parler d'amour*, pp. 33-40 note Arras' regular literary festivals and competitions.

Thiebaut' (R1666), and 'Adan, li quells doit miex trouver merchi' (R1066). Composed c. 1200, they contain two masculine voices, allowing direct comparison with the *tensos* examined above. 'Bons rois Thiebaut' is between a clerk and the King of Navarra ('Le roi de navarre'); the clerk asks the king whether, having loyally loved a lady for a long time without daring to articulate his love, he should tell her of his feelings. The opening stanza is quite specifically phrased. What the clerk wants to know from the king is what a courtly lover would do:

Dites, sire, qu'en font li fin amant:

Souffrent il tuit aussi si grant dolour,

Ou il dient le mal qu'il ont d'amour? (7-9)

Tell me, sire, what courtly lovers do about this: do they all endure as great a pain as this, or do they speak of the suffering they have from love?

From the outset the lyric places itself within an existing tradition, with a prototype against which the *trouvères* measure their conduct. This question implies that speech, and dialogue, are a means of mediating the extremes of courtly love, that courtly love and dialogue about it go hand in hand, and that talking to other lovers about love is sanctioned by the courtly tradition. The aspirational tone continues in the king's response. Taking up the reference to courtly lovers, he makes it clear that the recommended course of action is something that a courtly lover would do – essentially, the debates in these two *jeux-partis* use dialectic to consider the extremes of behaviour which can be determined by one term, that of a 'fin'amant' – these competing definitions support Dembowski's argument that part of the nature

of courtly vocabulary is its polyvalency.<sup>139</sup> The king is clear: a courtly lover should serve his lady using signs which his lady interprets, and via secrecy:

Que par servir est mainte amors donee;  
Par moz coverz et par cointes semblanz  
Et par signes doit on venir avant,  
Qu'ele saiche le mal et la dolor  
Que fins amis trait por li nuit et jor (14-18)

Love is given through service; one makes progress through hidden words and wise appearances, and by signs, so that she learns of the sadness and pain that a courtly lover carries for her, night and day.

Silence and secrecy are separate entities here. The use of signs, implying silence, is mentioned, as are 'moz coverz'. Language's role in communication between lover and lady is presented as depending on secrecy, and language as a sign: in other words, 'moz coverz' divides its audience into two parts, the initiated and the uninitiated. Silent 'signes' and careful language spoken by an expert who can control it are interwoven parts of a lover's armoury. Such an approach is reminiscent of the nuances of 'Farai un vers'.

However, language in this form places the onus on its audience, with the lady forced to choose between the initiated and the uninitiated groups. However, if she fails to recognize the lover's worth, that is because she has failed properly to read the message hidden in his words and his signs; she will then be deemed uncourtly,

---

<sup>139</sup> Dembowski, 'Vocabulary of Old French Courtly Lyrics', p. 775.

leading to a new lover / lady dynamic. The tension between silence and speech is very clear in this lyric. The clerk's response to this advice demonstrates his distress:

Assez trueve on qui set faire semblance  
De bien amer sanz grant dolour soffrir;  
Mais fins amis ne puet son mal covrir (23-25)

One can find someone who knows how to appear to love well without suffering great pain; but a courtly lover cannot disguise his suffering.

For the clerk language is the conduit to fulfillment, with his lady and his peers. The clerk's argument is that no true lover could possibly restrain himself from speech ('Je sai de voir que se le seüssiez / Ja dou dire ne me repreïssiez', 42-43, I know truly that if you knew [about love] you would never stop me speaking); he, like the king, concentrates on the lover / peer relationship. The king associates speech with lack of control, accusing the clerk of conforming to the stereotype of the lusty cleric:

Clers, je voi bien que haster vos volez,  
Et bien est droiz, qu'en clerc n'a abstinence (28-29)

Clerk, I see clearly that you want to hurry, and that's only right, since there is no abstinence in a clerk.

The implication is clear: lack of control is associated with speech between a man and a woman, while control is linked to secrecy, and is reserved for communication between men.

The same dilemma is examined in 'Adan, li quels'. Jehan Bretel asks Adam de la Halle which of two lovers should be rewarded by his lady – he who woos her in public, with no regard to who can hear, or he who would rather die than show his love. As in 'Bons rois Thiebaut', Adam's response links speech with what is appropriate for a courtly lover:

Sachiés, bien font leur devoir

En poursievant leur dames fin ami

...Car de petit d'amour viennent taisir (10-11; 16)

Know well, courtly lovers do their duty well if they pursue their ladies...Since little love comes from keeping quiet.

Adam focuses on what a good lover 'should' do, and while the advice is to rely on language, there is no indication that this will be translated into an address to the lady herself. Jehan's counter-argument against speaking out is that he who does so seeks his own honour at the expense of that of his lady. Silence and secrecy is at the heart of the courtly process, with one's reputation as a courtly lover constructed or destroyed by a complex structure of signs. The ability to communicate either in silence or in words, and have these signs correctly interpreted in a dialogue with one's preferred audience is key here. The ability to do this enables the masculine poetic voice to retain absolute control. The tension between submission and control is amply demonstrated here: if the lover does not speak, does he endanger his position within the courtly hierarchy, or is speaking about the fact that he does not speak enough? The interplay between a subject who is at the mercy of the distant lady and a subject who can create his own



position and that of his lady is complex, and the poetic voices use the back and forth of debate to explore it. The two voices use the issue of language and silence or secrecy to define their position within the courtly hierarchy, but the aim of each is to retain control over the signs which witness that position. Adam argues that words are the means of being perceived by others as a courtly lover, and of defining oneself as such:

Qu'en chou c'amant sont de parler hardi

Puet on l'amour perchevoir...

Parole doit, pour le cuer esclarchir,

En liu de femeril, par bouche issir (27-28; 31-32)

He who knows that lovers are bold in speech can perceive love...to show what's in the heart, words, not smoke, must emerge from the mouth.

Adam equates language with self-creation – although there is a risk that declaring one's love to the lady will end the poetic act. If love is fulfilled, then by definition there is no reason to continue singing, and both poet and lady slip from the linguistic sphere. If, however, the lover remains silent and relies on visible rather than aural signs then this prolongs the relationship and allows the conversation with his male peers to continue. The paradoxical link between silence and language is exploited by the masculine voices, and this symbiosis is echoed in the balance between submission to and domination of the lady, to whom the poetic voices ostensibly submit, but who is entirely silent; obliged to recognize the lovers' signs, in any medium; and at the mercy of the speaking voices' creative power.

Jehan's argument that service is the language of love picks up on this language / power opposition, with the assertion that:

Et si sert en bon espoir

Desert miex bien que li chent (20-21)

And he who serves in good faith deserves more good than he who boasts.

Jehan uses the stereotype of the lusty monk – he argues that God prefers the monk who prays quietly (35, 'coi et seri') than the monk who makes his prayer heard too boldly (37, 's'orison trop baudement'). The analogy is a good one, since the lover is often described as praying for mercy from his lady.

We can see in these lyrics a preoccupation with acting in a courtly way. These poetic voices frequently invoke the 'courtly lover' as a standard against which they measure themselves, giving the lyrics an aspirational tone. It is likely that the trouvères were aware that they were composing against the backdrop of an existing lyric tradition, with a model of the courtly lover and the tropes through which his emotions should be expressed already established. As Gally notes, the trouvères must adopt a 'position seconde', which gives them a critical perspective on the corpus they inherit. They are 'les héritiers d'une poétique qu'ils reçoivent déjà très formalisée et qu'ils décident de *translater*, de traduire dans leur langue et d'adapter à leur société'.<sup>140</sup> The poetic voice's reputation as a lover and as a composer is at stake, with each poetic voice engaged in a complex balancing act between control and loss of it in relation to their peers but also to their lady. The trouvères, as a group, were composing in an urban setting, with a competitive peer group - very

---

<sup>140</sup> Gally, *Parler d'amour*, p. 14.

different from the more feudal society of Occitania, with its *juvenes* or young knights jostling for favour with their lord.<sup>141</sup> The trouvères competed for prizes in Arras' literary competitions, but also for status within a tightly-knit, and for the time highly literate cadre of educated, urban men.<sup>142</sup> Breaking their silence to talk about the choice between silence or speech, and doing so with their peers rather than their lady, appears to be a compulsion for troubadours and trouvères. They delight in this paradox, and the oscillation between power and submission that it brings.

While silence is associated with sophistication in the lyric tradition, there is a distinct approach to silence and secrecy within narrative dialogues, which use silence to signify inexperience. Silent characters, unable or unwilling to speak about their love, do so because they are inexperienced and ignorant. These characters are naïve; their silence signifies confusion and incomprehension before overwhelming emotion. Secrecy, on the other hand, is associated in narrative dialogues with the sophisticated lover, who can only maintain a love affair through discretion. Just as in the lyrics, secrecy is a prerequisite for the courtly love affair, but the forward movement of the narrative plot means that the need for secrecy will almost inevitably be affected, leading to a *dénouement* when the affair is revealed. The next section will examine these very different approaches to silence and secrecy.

### Section Three: Narrative

---

<sup>141</sup> See Duby's discussion of the concept of *juvenes*, 'Dans la France du Nord-Ouest au XIIe siècle: les «jeunes» dans la société aristocratique'.

<sup>142</sup> Gally, *Parler d'amour*, p. 22, cites the 'écoles cathédrales et des universités, au droit qu'obtiennent les bourgeois d'ouvrir des écoles laïques dès le XIIe siècle...On peut supposer que comme partout l'enseignement est axé sur des connaissances utiles au commerce – écriture, calcul, langues vulgaires – mais qu'on y écrit aussi des vers et que l'on apprend les rudiments des arts et de l'étude des auctores'. See also Berger's *Littérature et société arrageoise au XIIIe siècle*, p. 110, in which he estimates that in 13th century Arras one man in four had been educated in some form.

This section considers dialogue within narrative texts which is built around silence and secrecy. The corpus is the Old French *Lanval* by Marie de France; the *Roman d'Enéas*; the *Roman de Silence*; *Cligès*; the *Chasteleine de Vergy*; and the Occitan *En Aquel Temps*. With the exception of the *Roman de Silence*, which uses silence in debate to explore the nature of identity and gender, each of these narratives explores courtly love via silence and secrecy, allowing their characters to navigate the beginning of love or its potential loss. In a courtly environment, secrecy is an integral part of the love affair, which cannot be maintained. As McCracken points out, 'if the feudal court is inhospitable to secrets about love, it is because the secret resists the centralizing organization of the court as a place where stories are told...The court is...characterized by a desire to know secrets'.<sup>143</sup> The characters balance power or the lack of it; total silence or declaring their feelings to their beloved; and speaking about whether to declare their feelings to their beloved, all within a court environment which threatens secrets. The major change from the lyric approach to silence and secrecy is that narratives often associate silence with inexperience. Instead of the sophistication and control of the lyrics, silence within narratives usually connotes lack of knowledge and control. Narratives use secrecy as discretion; breaking secrecy is a catalyst for the storyline, with revelation often equating to loss of the love affair.

My narrative corpus can be divided up into broad categories: first, dialogues which feature characters struggling to comprehend love, who consider whether they can break their silence and confess their feelings to the object of their affections (the *Roman d'Enéas* and *Cligès*). Secondly, dialogues predicated on silence and

---

<sup>143</sup> McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery*, p. 92.

secrecy as discretion, where revealing the love will destroy it (*Lanval* and the *Chasteleine de Vergy*). Thirdly, two narratives in which feminine characters' positions within the social hierarchy are dependent on their silence, where breaking one's silence radically alters one's social position and the constellation of other characters around them (the *Roman de Silence* and *En Aquel Temps*).

The anonymous *Roman d'Enéas* is one of the earliest extant Old French romances. It is one of three romances which address classical themes, frequently referred to by modern scholars as the 'triade classique'.<sup>144</sup> They date from c. 1150 – 1165, before the romances of Chrétien de Troyes (which date from not before 1170). Although not an identical translation, the *Enéas*' plot reflects Virgil's *Aeneid*. The section relevant to an investigation of silence and secrecy is the love of Enéas and Lavine. The more experienced – in war as well as in love – Enéas meets the princess Lavine after his arrival in Italy. The monologue I shall examine explores Lavine's feelings for Enéas, and her inability to communicate them to him.

Lavine uses what I term internal dialogue: her monologue evolves into a series of questions and answers, with a second poetic voice aiding her interrogation of her feelings. This voice is anonymous, and could be described as part of her psyche; its purpose seems to be to help her work through these unfamiliar emotions. From the outset, form and content are clear:

«Lasse, fait elle, que ai je?

Qui m'a sousprise? Que est ce?

---

<sup>144</sup> The others are *Le Roman de Thèbes* and *Le Roman de Troie*. See *Le Roman d'Enéas*, ed. by Petit, p. 7 and Paschal, 'The Structure of the *Roman d'Enéas*'.

Orainz estoie toute saine,

Or sui toute pasmee et vaine. (8145-48)

'Unfortunate, she said, what is wrong with me? Who has surprised me? What is this? Just now I was perfectly sane, but now I am completely weak and helpless'.

Using this suggested dialogue, Lavine makes sense of her confusion; her disarray is mitigated by her scholarly approach to love (she later sends a love letter to Enéas, for example, another way of using language in dialogue striking at a time when women were largely illiterate). This is a character who recognizes the power of Love and language, using them to her advantage.<sup>145</sup> The humour of her predicament is compounded by her mother's earlier attempt to explain the facts of love to her ('Se ce n'est ycest cuivert mal / Que ma mere me contoit hier', 8154-55, Unless it's that hidden pain which my mother told me about yesterday). The irony of an innocent girl trying to make sense of feelings which the extra-textual audience already recognizes continues throughout the monologue. Having quite quickly realized that she is experiencing love (8157), Lavine becomes indignant. She asks herself why this love is not more pleasant:

Ou est li rasuaigemens,

La boiste o toz les ongemens? (8163-64)

Where is the comfort, the box with all the soothing creams?

---

<sup>145</sup> Adams writes of Lavine that she 'succeeds by drawing him [Enéas] discreetly into love discourse through her Latin love letter. As student clerics learned early on, desire is both aroused and appeased through literature'. *Violent Passions*, p. 125.

She realises that the 'box' is nowhere to hand, and berates herself for allowing 'the Trojan' to enter her eyes. In a neat turn of phrase, she identifies the way love found her as follows:

Ci m'a saisi a la fenestre

Dont le Troÿen esgardoie (8182-83)

It seized me through the window from where I watched the Trojan.

Love's arrow entering through the eyes is an Ovidian trope regularly used in the courtly tradition – as Biernoff puts it, Lavine 'is "seized" by Love as he penetrates her eye and inflames her body'.<sup>146</sup> Lavine uses language to decipher a silent attack by Love; having established her emotional state via internal dialogue, she addresses the communication of said emotion. The loss of control is total, with a sense that she has been overtaken by an external force:

Le Troÿen m'estuet amer,

Mais moult le me covient celer (8189-90)

I must love the Trojan, but I really must hide it.

At this point, the monologue moves into internal dialogue, as if Lavine's psyche cannot cope with the contradictory positions of overwhelming love and silence. The dialogue considers whether Lavine should flee the love she now feels:

---

<sup>146</sup> Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages*, p. 49; Blumenfeld-Kosinski discusses the *Roman d'Enéas* as part of a process of *translatio studii*, shaping Ovidian and classical tropes, including the love affair of Lavine and Enéas: *Reading Myth*, pp. 30-43; see also Spence's discussion of the similarities between the effects of courtly love and envy on Lavine, both of which are communicated via one's eyes, in "'Lo Cop Mortal': The Evil Eye and the Origins of Courtly Love", pp. 307-8, 316-17.

- Amors me destraint moult por lui.
- Et tu l'eschive, si le fui!
- Ne puis trouver en mon coraje. (8197-99)

Love tortures me for him; So escape him, flee him!; I can't find the courage inside myself.

This submission to love obliterates Lavine but also gives her a clear sense of identity. While I do not suggest that Lavine has gained control through courtly love, she certainly gains a clear-cut identity and position within the courtly hierarchy. The persistence and bitterness with which she reproaches Love (over 49 lines) for having placed her in this situation, and for not bringing her the comfort and cure which she knows are available, are testament to her evolution. As Lavine herself points out, she is a quick learner ('Amor, a t'escole m'a mis / En poy d'eure m'as moult appris', 8245-46, Love, you've put me in your school, and you've taught me a lot in just a few hours). Despite the inexperience which ties her to silence, Lavine understands Love's power. The final section of her monologue is full of concern that her mother – the acknowledged expert on courtly love – will correctly assess her daughter's state just by looking at her:

Ma mere set moult de tel rien,  
 Elle s'apercevera bien  
 A mon viaire, a ma coulour  
 Que je sui surprise d'amor. (8297-8300)

My mother knows a lot about this sort of thing – she will clearly see from my face, from my colour, that I have been surprised by love.



This alertness to visual communication and the proper interpretation of signs shows Lavine's maturity. She has moved in the space of one monologue from alienation to recognition of and submission to Love, a position maintained in the face of interrogation from her anonymous interlocutor. By the end of the monologue Lavine is struggling with the concept of silence versus speech, a real shift for a character undoubtedly at the naïve and inexperienced end of the spectrum.

Lavine submits entirely to Love, but does so having gone through a dialogue which has established what she is feeling and whether she should speak about these emotions. Lavine, like *Cligès'* Alexandre, the next character I shall consider, uses internal dialogue as part of a thought process which allows the character to navigate an unfamiliar world of emotions. Both Lavine and Alexandre, while undoubtedly forced into silence thanks to a lack of sophistication, negotiate a balance: they use dialogue to explore how they feel about love and the state they see as an inevitable part of this emotion – silence. Despite their different genders Alexandre goes through a similar emotional arc to that of Lavine: he begins with confusion, moves through recognition, then submits to Love. I focus here on Alexandre's attitude to silence, and consider the structure of his monologue in Chapter Three.

*Cligès*, which dates from 1176, does not, unlike Chrétien's other extant texts, focus solely on the Arthurian court.<sup>147</sup> Instead, the narrative takes in Constantinople and Germany as well as Great Britain and the Arthurian world. Alexandre and Soredamors fall in love, and each uses a monologue containing internal dialogue to

---

<sup>147</sup> *Cligès*, ed. by Méla and Collet, p. 5.

explore this emotion. Alexandre's monologue is based on two premises: first, he is unsure what this emotion is, and secondly, once it has been identified, he is reluctant to reveal his love to Soredamors: as Polak puts it, 'he is a passive victim...his dilemma is that he is too timid to speak, yet needs to be healed'.<sup>148</sup> Alexandre epitomizes the move from lyric to narrative – he is the lover who, far from using silence as a language or sign in its own right, retreats into silence because he is inexperienced and unable to process his emotions, albeit, as Tasker Grimbert points out, that this particular character echoes the absolute submission to *Amors* seen in the lyrics.<sup>149</sup>

The sense of dislocation is established from the first lines, with Alexandre associating his feelings with madness:

«Por fol, fet il, me puis tenir. (626)

'I could see myself as mad', he said.

The word *fol* or its derivatives is repeated five times in the first seven lines. He is a man at sea, unable to translate feelings into language. Madness also connotes a distance from reality and from the ability to reflect that reality in language, giving Alexandre's wish to remain silent extra resonance. He quickly moves to an assertion that he will not speak out about his suffering – not yet identified as love:

Si celeraï ce dont me dueil

Ne n'oserai de mes doulors

---

<sup>148</sup> Polak, *Chrétien de Troyes: Cligès*, p. 42.

<sup>149</sup> Tasker Grimbert, 'Cligès and the Chansons', pp. 125-29.

Aïde querre ne secors? (634-36)

Will I hide that which pains me, and not dare to seek help or comfort for my pains?

This retreat into silence, together with his thought that if he is not mad, then perhaps he is ill, identifies Alexandre as a novice in courtly love and gives the monologue the ironic and comic tone identified by Gaunt and Haidu.<sup>150</sup> He later states that not seeking help for one's ills is a form of madness ('Foux est qui sent enfermeté / S'il ne porquiert qu'il ait santé', 637-38, He is mad who feels infirm, if he does not seek better health). However, he is clear that even if he does ask, he will not find the help he seeks, since he knows that his illness requires more than conventional medicine to cure it.

The turning point in the monologue comes when Alexandre admits that he has known all along that he needs a specific kind of medicine to be cured:

Des que primes cest mal senti,  
Se mostrer l'osasse ne dire,  
Poïsse je parler a mire  
Qui del tout me poïst aidier. (650-53)

Since I first felt this illness, if I had dared show or speak of it, I could have spoken to a doctor who could have helped me with it all.

---

<sup>150</sup> Haidu suggests that the introspection typical of the courtly lover and epitomised by Alexandre's monologue was already, in the twelfth century, being used ironically: *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes*, pp. 28-31; Gaunt comments on the humour of Alexandre's naivety: *Love and Death*, pp. 130-31.

The reason for his silence is fear that his feelings are difficult to explain and a doctor might not listen to him (654-55). These revelations are followed by Alexandre naming his feelings:

Ne sai dont la doulors m'est prise.

Ne sai? Si faz, jel cuit savoir,

Ce mal me fet Amors avoir. (660-62)

I don't know from where this pain has come. I don't know? I do, I believe I know.  
Love has made me feel this illness.

It is as if Alexandre has to steel himself to recognize what he knew all along, but was too naïve or scared to admit – he needed to go through a set of questions and answers to reveal the truth. This confession, though, adds to his confusion. The next 103 lines consist of Alexandre using internal dialogue to explore how Love overwhelmed him, tricking his body into changing its loyalties:

Mon cuer et mes .II. euz ensemble,

Mais il me heent, ce me semble. (751-52)

My heart and my two eyes together, but they hate me, it seems to me.

Having commented on the perfidy of his body and his faculties, the final section of Alexandre's monologue contains a detailed description of his lady, which runs through her physical attributes at great length (90 lines). As if still unable to admit the extent of his love, like Lavine and her Trojan he never names Soredamors, referring to her only as 'the arrow':

Or vos reparlerai dou dart

Qui m'est comandez et bailliez,

Coment il est fez et tailliez (766-68)

Now I shall tell you about the arrow, which has been given and entrusted to me, how it is made and shaped.

As Enders argues, Alexandre uses memory to keep his lady at a distance, and language is a key part of this process: 'The whole point of Alexandre's inquiry into his feelings is the whole point of memory: to move from image to speech'.<sup>151</sup> He turns memories of her beauty into speech, and in doing so uses language to reinforce his feelings but keep Soredamors as a perfect and essentially static vision, supporting Topsfield's argument that Alexandre embraces *amor de lonh* (Jaufré Rudel's love at a distance).<sup>152</sup> He presents himself as cut off from his senses (*fol*), then admits that he is in love but only because his body has betrayed him. His inability to label his emotions stems from inexperience and fear: not once in the monologue does he consider telling his beloved how he feels. He needs internal dialogue to tease out his emotions, and it is internal dialogue which pushes him from his opening position of complete loss of control toward his final position, where he has gained a modicum of control. The monologue ends with Alexandre accepting Love, a move which gives him an element of control, since it is offered voluntarily:

Or face Amors de moi son boen

Si come il doit fere dou suen,

---

<sup>151</sup> Enders, 'Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien's *Cligès*', p. 15.

<sup>152</sup> Topsfield, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 72.

Car je le vueil et si me plest.

(861-63)

Now let Love do his will with me, just as he does for those who are his, since I want this and it pleases me.

This small shift toward acceptance returns to Alexandre an element of the control he had ceded to Love. Despite the retention of some sort of autonomy hinted at in these final lines, Alexandre is quite clearly a character whose inexperience in the field of courtly love is the dominant factor in his choice between speech and silence.

The next two texts use silence and secrecy in a very different way. Alexandre and Lavine are trapped in silence due to inexperience and lack of sophistication – they are unable to conceive of silence as a form of communication. The characters who use dialogue in *Lanval* and *La Chasteleine de Vergy* do so because they too are trapped, but in a different way. Both are trapped by circumstance: their love depends on silence as discretion for it to continue. Unlike Lavine and Alexandre they are more than capable of conceiving of silence as a messenger, of silence as power. They know that speech will end their love, and there is, as Bloch points out, a feeling of inevitability about the revelation: 'The oath is taken to be transgressed. We know, in fact, that it will be violated the moment it is spoken. Like the stark world of repeatedly entwined broken promises of "La Chatelaine de Vergi," the universe of "Lanval" is one of necessity in which characters seem drawn along by an inescapable logic of articulation according to which each narrative element entails the next as part of a causal chain'.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France*, p. 70.

Marie de France's *Lanval* is one of the earliest extant Arthurian tales (dated to between 1175 and 1200), and her only *lai* with an Arthurian setting.<sup>154</sup> It tells of the eponymous knight, who, at Carlisle with Arthur and his court at Pentecost, is overlooked when the king recognizes those who have served him with lavish gifts. Lanval, unable to ask for recognition on his own account and with no advocate, is a knight in a foreign land, upset and embarrassed. Wandering outside the town, he is found by two young ladies, who lead him to their mistress, a fairy who grants him her love on the strict condition that it be kept secret. Arriving home, he finds he has a vast fortune, and distributes it generously. Eventually, Lanval is noticed by the queen, who declares her love for him. Lanval, unwilling to be unfaithful to his *amie*, but unable to tell the queen about his true love, rejects her, prompting a furious response. Goaded into anger he admits the truth, clinching the exchange by stating that his *amie*, and the least of her serving girls, are far more beautiful than the queen. Once the queen has told Arthur of this insult, a trial is held, and Lanval is told that if he can prove that his insult was factually correct, he will be acquitted. Lanval despairs, since having admitted his love he has lost the ability to contact his *amie*. The *lai* ends with her dramatic appearance, declaring that she is indeed Lanval's beloved. Since everyone agrees that she (and the maidens who serve her) are more beautiful than the queen, Lanval is absolved of any wrong. As she leaves, Lanval accompanies her, and they depart for a new life on Avalon.

---

<sup>154</sup> Bullock-Davies, 'Lanval and Avalon', p. 142 and Hoepffner, 'Pour la chronologie des *Lais* de Marie de France', pp. 352-53.

Throughout, a premium is placed on language and silence – and on the link between language, silence, and suffering as a test of a courtly lover's worth.<sup>155</sup> The opening couplet places language front and centre:

L'aventure d'un altre lai,  
Cum ele avint, vus cunterai (1-2)

I will tell you the adventure of another story, as it happened.

Lanval's unhappiness is prompted by the envy of others; Spence describes this 'negative pole' of Marie's work as linked to speech: 'envy shows itself...through libelous and slanderous speech'.<sup>156</sup> Thus envy, a key emotion in *Lanval*, has a direct relationship with language, highlighted throughout the text, and linked to several instances of speech.<sup>157</sup> As Bloch argues, 'the coherence of the works of Marie de France lies in her constant concern with language...the critical issue for France's first woman poet is precisely the question of how language might negotiate relations between individuals in a world that is less and less defined by military might and increasingly ruled by models of mediated social exchange'.<sup>158</sup> I suggest that *Lanval* epitomises Bloch's argument about the works of Marie de France, with a reliance on speech and silence as the means of negotiating one's place within a disfunctional Arthurian court which Marie's audience would almost certainly have recognised.<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>155</sup> See Ferguson, 'Folklore in the in the *Lais* of Marie de France', p. 6.

<sup>156</sup> Spence, 'Double Vision: Love and Envy in the *Lais*', p. 265.

<sup>157</sup> Burgess discusses envy, and the centrality of language, in *Lanval* in *Lais of Marie de France*, pp. 19-20; 105-6.

<sup>158</sup> Bloch, *Anonymous Marie de France*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>159</sup> Jackson argues that '*Lanval* has no point at all unless those who heard it knew of the petulant, weak Arthur, the Guenevere who betrayed him with Lancelot, the Gawain who was



The injustice of Arthur's rewards is compounded by the lack of an advocate who can speak on his behalf, and his own reluctance to speak:

...Ne l'en sovint,  
Ne nuls des soens bien ne li tint  
...S'al chevalier mesavenist,  
Ja une feiz ne l'en pleinsist.  
...Ne Lanval ne li demanda. (19-20; 25-26; 32)

He [Arthur] didn't remember him, nor did any of his entourage want what was best for him...If anything bad befell the knight [Lanval], they wouldn't plead his case even once...Nor did Lanval ask him.

From the opening lines speech or silence is crucial to social success or failure; it is the cement which rewards good behaviour or bad and which constructs a fair courtly society. Lanval is a foreigner and an 'idealist' whose lack of social or familial ties, compounded by his silence, triggers the story.<sup>160</sup> Likewise, when he is led to his *amie* her terms of engagement rely on his silence. The dialogue between Lanval and his lady links silence with fulfillment in love:

Se vus estes pruz e curteis,

---

courteous above other knights, and the obsession of the court with leisure pursuits'. 'The Arthuricity of Marie de France', p. 3.

<sup>160</sup> Damon, 'Marie de France: Psychologist of Courtly Love', p. 984.

Emperere ne quens ne reis

N'ot unkes tant joie ne bien

Kar jo vus aim sur tute rien. (113-16)

If you are worthy and courtly, neither emperor nor count nor king will have so much joy or good, because I love you more than anything else.

Lanval's response is firm: he will obey his lady's every wish (127; 151-52). She emphasises the need for silence, saying that any deviation from this will mean he'll never see her again:

Ne vus descovrez a nul hume! (145)

Do not tell anyone!

As he departs for Arthur's court, she warns that, when they meet, Lanval will be the only person who will be able to see or hear her ('nuls huem fors vus ne me verra / ne ma parole nen orra', 169-70, no man except you will see me or hear my words). There is a symmetry here, in that language both gains and denies Lanval his love – he accesses it through language, loses it through dialogue with the queen, then regains it through the trial process. His dialogue with the queen opens with her declaration of love:

'Lanval, mult vus ai honuré

E mult cheri e mult amé.

Tute m'amur poëz avoir:

Kar me dites vostre voleir! (265-68)

Lanval, I have much honoured you, and cared for you and loved you. You can have all my love: so tell me your wishes!

This abrupt change of tone – Lanval has gone from an outsider overlooked by Arthur to the object of the queen’s love – again depends upon language. The queen hopes that their love will be sealed with Lanval’s words, but his response cites his feudal relationship with Arthur:

Ja pur vus ne pur vostre amur

Ne mesferai a mun seignur! (275-76)

Neither for you nor for your love will I betray my lord!

It is noteworthy that, despite Arthur’s poor treatment of him, and his vow of silence to his *amie*, Lanval’s first stated loyalty is to his king, not his lady – despite the feudal overtones to their relationship and his lady’s role as the head of ‘an alternative courtly economy’.<sup>161</sup> It is only when the queen, angry at this rejection, accuses him of homosexuality (‘Asez le m’a hum dit souvent / Que de femme n’avez talent’, 281-82, People have often mentioned to me that you’re not interested in women) that Lanval loses control and reveals the truth. The queen relies on language, embodying an opposition between negative feminine language and the positive language of Lanval’s *amie*.<sup>162</sup> Lanval’s loss of temper is a loss of control over language and love:

---

<sup>161</sup> Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 167.

<sup>162</sup> Harf summarises this opposition as follows: ‘Dans le lai de *Lanval*...les deux pôles sont incarnés par deux personnages féminins: la reine perfide qui veut perdre le héros coupable d’avoir repoussé son amour, et la fée bienfaisante qui sauvera par deux fois Lanval de la haine des hommes’. ‘La reine ou la fée’, p. 81.

Mes jo aim e si sui amis  
Cele ki deit avoir le pris  
Sur tutes celes que jeo sai  
...tute la plus povre meschine,  
Valt mierz de vus, dame reïne,  
De cors, de vis e de bealté (295-93; 301-3)

But I love and am loved by she who is superior to all the ladies I know...the least of her serving-girls is worth more than you, my lady queen, in body, face, and beauty.

Betraying his immaturity, Lanval cannot maintain silence as discretion, and the dialogue seen in the trial is as much an examination of his identity as a courtly lover as it is of the facts. The arrival of his *amie* is confirmed when Lanval articulates his recognition of the visitor:

‘Par fei’, fet il, ‘ceo est m’amie! (613)

‘My faith,’ he said, ‘that’s my *amie*!’

Likewise, his lady identifies him as her lover, saying that she does not want him to fall victim to his own words (636-37, ‘ne vueil mie qu’a mal li turt / de ceo qu’il dist’). Once the king and his court are satisfied that Lanval spoke the truth, he and his lady depart for the isle of Avalon. The court scene represents the pinnacle of the text’s dependence on words and dialogue as a form of truth; scholars have noted the accuracy with which Marie replicates the contemporary legal process.<sup>163</sup> The focus is entirely on words and their ability to reflect a truth; Lanval must fight using

---

<sup>163</sup> Illingworth, ‘La Chronologie des *Lais* de Marie de France’, p. 460 and Mickel, ‘Antiquities in Marie’s *Lais*’, p. 128.

language in legal debate, with his *amie* as his advocate ('Se par mei puet estre aquitez / Par voz baruns seit delivrez!', 641-42, If he can be acquitted by me, may he be freed by your barons!). She leaves Arthur's court 'riding off as a knight, through dressed in female finery, with a man mounted behind her', having used debate to best the knights at Arthur's court.<sup>164</sup> As Bloch argues, this is an example of courtly literature reflecting society's move toward the inquisitorial legal system, with the courtly lover fighting for his lady and his position – but doing so with language, not the sword.<sup>165</sup>

*Lanval* explores the slippery relationship between language, reality and courtly love. All the characters use language to their own ends, alternating between power, loss of power, discretion and stupidity. Lanval oscillates between ostracism and inclusion, with language the conduit for his relationship with the social hierarchy. Ultimately, Lanval's *amie* can be read as the character with the most power: tellingly, her silence is as powerful as her speech. Giving Lanval the largesse to boost his reputation with the court, refusing to heed his calls when he has broken their compact, then supporting his boast with her appearance are actions which dictate his position in the chivalric world. Lanval is left to struggle with the impossible choice of her terms of engagement, and his decision to speak rather than remain silent is presented as the wrong one.

The *Chasteleine de Vergy* also features a knight forced to choose between speech and silence. Reminiscent of the choice faced by participants in a *jeu-parti*, the knight in this mid-thirteenth century narrative loves the Chasteleine, but this love

---

<sup>164</sup> Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 175.

<sup>165</sup> Bloch, *Literature and Law*, pp. 197-214.

relies on discretion. As in *Lanval* the knight is accosted by his duchess, who wants him for herself, and his rejection of her leads to his uncomfortable conversation with the duke, who has been misled by an angry, rejected duchess. Each dialogue relies on the knight's discretion, and in each he handles his commitment to silence differently, caught in a trap in which the characters, language, and silence form the corners of an impossible dilemma. Kostoroski summarises the text's inbuilt tension as follows: 'One could say, then, that the ideal couple was menaced from the very start by that which symbolized and facilitated their love: in one perspective, the dog, and in another, the very condition upon which it was established, the secret... This is the underlying theme of the *Chastelaine de Vergi*. An insurmountable obstacle is inherent in the very nature of a love that strives to be perfect. Such a love cannot endure'.<sup>166</sup> In this chapter I consider silence and secrecy in the *Chastelaine de Vergi*'s dialogue, but I also look at dialogic structure in the Chastelaine's final monologue in the next chapter, 'Monologue as Dialogue'.

The first dialogue sees the duchess pursue the knight's affections, puzzled because he is not attached to any particular lady. His response is that he is uninterested in such things:

- Madame», fet il, «je n'ai mie

Encor a ce mise m'entente. (66-67)

'Madam', he said, 'I have never concerned myself with that sort of thing'.

The duchess continues with more force, urging him to seek a lady of high rank, and concluding that she should be that lady (84-86). Just as *Lanval* did, the knight

---

<sup>166</sup> Kostoroski, 'Quest in Query and the *Chastelaine de Vergi*', pp. 187-88.

immediately cites fidelity to his lord, her husband, as the reason for his inability to reciprocate:

Mes Diex de cele amor me gart,  
Qu'a moi n'a vous tort cele part  
Ou la honte monseignior gise. (91-93)

But God keeps me from this love, so that neither you nor I wrong or shame my lord.

The knight ends the dialogue by refusing to say anything further, retreating back into the silence which the chasteleine demands of him («madame, merci; nus certes mes tant vous en di.», 101-2, 'madam, mercy; no one, just as I have said'). The knight can only tell one part of a complex truth. The need to say something, though, leaves him at the mercy of language as a weapon. His side of the dialogue is quite literally not what she wishes to hear, and this failure to speak as she requires of him, nor to say what he really feels, leaves him in an uncomfortable middle ground where language is neither entirely truthful nor productive. This failure to utilize language – neither silence nor sophisticated speech – leads to the knight's dialogue with the duke, who interrogates him about his emotional life, having been told by the duchess that the knight tried to seduce her. This dialogue forces the knight to choose between loyalty to his lord or to his lady. Having already articulated his loyalty to his liege lord, when he does break his silence it is out of loyalty to the duke, leaving his lady betrayed. His answer to an impossible choice will have consequences for their love, with speech the catalyst or conduit for action.

The duke opens with an attack on the knight's character, which seems to come out of the blue:

«Certes», fet li dus, «c'est grans deus,  
Quant proece avez et biauté  
Et il n'a en vous loiauté,  
Si m'en avez bien deceü (156-59)

'Certainly', said the duke, 'it's a great sadness, given that you have worth and good looks, that you have no loyalty in you, and have greatly disappointed me'.

The dialogue starts, therefore, with the two men discussing the merits of the knight, and his alleged disloyalty to his lord – a situation caused by his silence, which was maintained out of loyalty to his lady and his lord. Prompted by the duke's intervention, this silence is broken because of anger. Like Lanval, the knight is provoked into speech – the narrator describes him as shaking with anger ('si que tout li tremblent li menbre', 179, so that all his limbs trembled). Abandoning restraint and discretion, he considers the impossible choice between his lord and his lady, and he throws himself on the mercy of the duke. Again, he relies on language in every sense – that his words are reliable, but those which communicated this crime to the duke are not:

«Sire», fet il, «pour Dieu merci!  
...Si a mal fet qui vous a dit. (190; 195)

'Lord', he said, 'for God's sake have mercy!...He who told you this has done wrong.



However, the duke only reiterates his anger, and this anger is supported by detail of the alleged seduction – it is precisely this detail ('vous l'avez proiee et requise', 200, you begged and asked her) which seems to be the deciding factor in whether the duke believes his wife or not. The central role of language is neatly summarized by the knight's comment that 'My lady [the duchess] has said what pleases her' (' – Madame dit ce que li plest', 204). Likewise, the knight and the duke find a way, through language, to what pleases them.

The duke offers a way out, saying that if the knight swears to answer all his questions truthfully, then he will accept this. For a modern reader, there is irony in the duke's willingness to rely on the spoken word when he has just rejected the knight's protestations of innocence, but that would underestimate the reliance placed in the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries on an emerging legal system which had moved away from judicial duel and toward trial as we would recognise it. The knight's response is predicated on his ability honestly to answer enquiries regarding his supposed seduction of the duchess, but the duke and the knight work from differing assumptions. The duke does not address the seduction directly, but instead asks for proof the knight loves elsewhere:

Se ne me dites que aillors

Amez en tiel liu par amors

Que m'en faciez sanz nule doute

Savoir en la verité toute (261-64)

If you don't tell me that you love elsewhere, in such a way of love, that you let me know the truth about everything, with no doubts.

The threat of exile and loyalty to his lord triggers the knight's speech, although the narrator makes it clear that the knight is aware of the impact of his actions:

Que s'il dist la verité pure,  
Qil dira se il ne se parjure,  
A mort se tient qu'il meffet tant  
Qu'il trespasse le convenant  
Que a sa dame et s'amie a,  
Et est seürs de perdre la  
S'ele s'en puet apercevoir;  
Et s'il ne dist au duc le voir,  
Parjures est et foi mentie (271-79)

That if he speaks the absolute truth, which he must do if he is not to perjure himself, he is as good as dead since he is responsible for breaking the covenant which he has made with his lady and *amie*; he is sure to lose her if she learns about this. And if he does not tell the duke the truth, he is a perjurer and has broken his trust.

The duke assures him that any words will be received in absolute confidence – again, there is irony here, when two men talk about breaking silence on an issue which properly concerns a silent lady. There is at this point an interpolation, with the knight thinking of a stanza of one of the Castelain de Couci's songs. This song reflects on how much he misses a beloved lady, and signals the narrative's direction of travel. Interrupting these thoughts, the duke swears to remain silent in the same emotional terms as those used by the knight when considering his love for his lady (318-20) – and he will go on to betray his word, undermining the gravity with which the matter is discussed and highlighting the fickle nature of speech. As

Gaunt puts it, 'The *Chasteleine de Vergy* seems to suggest that once knowledge of love is shared, love itself is destroyed'.<sup>167</sup> It is this tension between knowledge shared as a means of maintaining a bond (between two men) and knowledge shared as a destructive force which dominates the narrative.

The duke swears on his body and soul that the words, which will break an oath, will never be spoken to another person, creating a layer of promises, all of which are worthless. Oaths seem to evaporate the moment they are spoken:

- Lors», dist li dus, «je vous creant,  
Seur le cors, seur l'ame de moi,  
Et seur l'amor et seur la foi  
Que je vois doi pour vostre hommage (332-35)

'Well then', said the duke, 'I swear to you, on my body and my soul, and on the love and the faith that I owe you for your fealty'.

This promise prompts the knight's confession that he loves the duke's niece, the Chasteleine (341-43). The dialogue moves on to the practical aspects of the affair, with the knight revealing that the mechanism for their meetings is the Chasteleine's little dog. Having up until now relied solely on language, the duke's need for detail and to see an assignation emerges (359-70). This is a different form of evidence and one which relies on the visual and not the aural / oral. It is as if the back and forth around the knight's decision to break his silence, which came with much linguistic fanfare, is now revealed as the trappings which precede the real exchange. In this four-cornered relationship (duke, duchess, knight, and

---

<sup>167</sup> Gaunt, *Love and Death*, p. 88.

chasteleine), language matters most to the female characters. The duchess uses language with intent, breaking her silence to accuse the knight and make the chasteleine aware that the secret is out, and the chasteleine sticks to her vow of silence, only speaking when she thinks she is unheard. The masculine characters weave in and out of silence with little thought for the consequences, speaking of silence as though they understand its implications, while precipitating events for which they are unprepared.

A gendered approach to silence and secrecy is brought to the fore in my two final narratives. They approach silence and secrecy within dialogue in a very different way from those above, and it is this difference that I would like to highlight. Both *En Aquei Temps c'om era gais* (an Occitan narrative by Raimon Vidal de Besalú which dates to the mid thirteenth century) and the Old French *Roman de Silence*, which dates to c. 1252, have at their heart feminine characters who break their silence. When they do speak, the characters play with gender stereotypes, participating in dialogue which addresses what it means to be 'feminine'. Silence in debate, for these characters, is associated not with a sophistication or discretion, but with disempowerment. Their position is clearly that of outsiders, so they take up masculine forms of speech and use them to insert themselves into a masculine courtly hierarchy.

*En Aquei Temps* is a narrative about a Limousin knight whose adventures in love do not go smoothly. He loves a married lady, who retains him as her lover for more than seven years. One day at Easter, he speaks to her of his service and love and requests a reward. His lady rejects him, and the castellan's niece comforts the knight. He confides in her, and she advises him to renew his suit the next day, but

when she tries to talk to her lady about this gets short shrift, as does the knight. Finding solace in each other, the knight and the castellan's niece embark on a love affair. This affair happily encompasses her marriage to one of the most powerful barons in the area. Of course, once his original lady hears of their happiness she summons the knight, who rejects her plea that they rekindle their affair. Thwarted, the lady summons the castellan's niece and they have a long debate about who deserves the knight's love. This debate ends with their agreeing to send a *jongleur* to a judge, Hugues de Mataplana. His judgment is communicated back to the two ladies by the *jongleur*, who promptly resume their debate, querying the validity of a judgment which returns the knight to his original lady. The narrative closes on them still debating the point.

The knight's speaking role in this text is confined to 126 lines (the ladies' debates cover nearly 500 lines); masculine speech is comprehensively outweighed by the sheer volume of feminine speech. The gendered roles are unstable: the nameless knight is given the attributes of the perfect courtly lover but kept in the static and largely silent position usually occupied by the courtly lady. The two ladies are opposing types: the perfect courtly lady and the 'selfish' lady. I will suggest that even in a text which gives the feminine characters such unusually large speaking roles, they are still reduced to one-dimensional caricatures of 'good' versus 'bad' courtly ladies.

The feminine characters discuss what it is to be feminine within the courtly hierarchy, giving voice to the silent courtly lady of troubadour lyric, but do so within a courtly (and legal) system peopled by masculine voices. The original lady rejects her knight for his presumption ('No y avia pro que-us ames / E-us tengues per mon

cavayer?', 165-66, Wasn't it enough that I loved you, and had you as my knight?), shocked that his understanding of the terms of courtly love differs from hers. The knight expected his seven years of service to have gained him the physical rewards he wanted, and to have done so easily ('E ar, can cugey penre plan / E leu so c'avia servit', 244-45, And now, when I thought to take simply and easily reward for my service). Silence suits each lady well: speech is less certain in its advantages. In contrast, for the knight speech gains him the relationship he wants. Confiding in the *demoiselle*, his lament gives him new love. Despite years of service and his pain at being rejected, his courtly nature (which ensures that he listens politely to the *demoiselle* in the first place) enables a timely swap from one lady to another. The *demoiselle's* position is defined from her first appearance, when her good breeding is matched to that of the knight:

E-I cavayer fo ensenhatz

Josta si li fes bel estatje

Com a donzela d'aut paratje

Deu hom far, cant es pros ni bela. (207-10)

And the knight, well educated, rightly welcomes her warmly, just as a man should do for a girl of good breeding, when she is worthy and beautiful.

Thus silence works for the *demoiselle*, just as it did for the original lady. Silent, their place in the courtly world is fixed. Once they speak, the outcomes are less certain and less positive, since one lady must lose her lover and with him her status. Their debate has the tone of a lament, with each listing the courtly qualities she embodies to no avail, since no matter what they say a man who has never met any of those involved will decide the matter.

The original lady's view is that, no matter her qualities, a lady's place in the courtly world is cemented by her ability to attract a lover:

...qu'e-l mon non a,  
Ad obs de dona far certa,  
Ni bon son pretz tan ric cabal,  
Com cavayer pros e lial (757-60)

...that in the world there is nothing like a worthy and loyal knight, valiant, good and courtly, to make a lady secure.

The lady presents herself as unchanging, constant during the seven year relationship with the knight – this silent constancy was her undoing:

E yeu, que anc nulhs pensatz, vas,  
Ni vil no-m fo cargatz ni mes,  
Remanc ses joy, e, car non es  
Mos dretz saubutz, a tort blasmada. (882-85)

And I, who never thought anything bad, am left without joy, and, since my rights are not known, I am wrongly blamed.

The exchange of the knight, a symbol of worth, is depicted as part of an inherently unfair system (866-70) in which the feminine characters are left voiceless and at the mercy of others' whims.

The *demoiselle* describes how she acquired the knight, and criticizes the lady's behaviour. The feminine characters have broken their silence to dispute the nature of courtliness: the *demoiselle* feels that silent constancy is wrong, and that the right course would have been to accept the knight's entreaties and reward him:

Per so car yeu sai que .VII. ans  
Si doncx non renha ab enjans,  
Neys dos, no-s pot dona tener  
De far a cavayer plazer (937-40)

I know that in seven years, or even in two, if she is not guided by deceit, a woman should not hold back from pleasing her knight.

This theme continues, with the *demoiselle* making it clear that silent constancy is inferior to an active engagement with one's knight (984-87). The lady, she thinks, should play an active role in reputation management ('Salvar deu dona son capdel / E c'om non perda re ab ley', 992-93, A lady should guard her conduct, so that a man loses nothing with her). Moreover, the lady has betrayed her lack of courtliness in her speech:

Mal avetz fag, e pieitz dizetz  
Segon amor a bon captenh. (1002-3)

You have behaved badly and spoken worse according to how to conduct oneself in love.

The *demoiselle* does, in fact, offer the knight back to the lady, but her demolition of the lady's behaviour renders this offer meaningless, given the implication that the



knight will be at a disadvantage with this lady who does not know how to be courtly (1054, 'aisi-l prendetz'). The lady's response focuses on her *dreg* or the law and her rights; this sentiment epitomizes the debate, as she says:

...Per qu'ieu breumen

Vos dic e segon dreg d'amor (1078-79)

I will tell you briefly and according to the laws of love.

This is the crux of the matter: the ladies have broken their silence to consider what love and its laws requires of them. The knight's value is symbolic – he represents their worth as courtly ladies, and their competing models of courtliness leave the knight able to pick and choose between them. The *demoiselle's* determination to hold on to her knight is clear when she responds that 'Non laisserai per aitals ditz / Sel que-m fa vieure e valer' (1088-89, I will not leave he who gives me life and value because of these words). She will plead her case before any reasonable judge, relying on a masculine third party and invoking the law and her rights:

E ve-us men a dreg et a plait

En calque poder vos vulhatz (1100-1)

And I will rely on law and on pleading before any power that you like.

This decision to pass their dilemma to a legal authority is supported by the lady, who demands her legal rights too ('Et yeu lo'n prenc!', 1104, I'll have those too!). Finally, though, one must question the impact of their speech. Arguably, the knight – a minor character who is a catalyst for the debate and judgment, which take up

the majority of the text – ends up with two worthy ladies fighting over him, despite the fact that he is a stereotype, barely fleshed out by the author.

My final text, the *Roman de Silence*, is taken last because it is so different from the rest of the corpus in subject matter and approach, yet it does combine elements already discussed above. These include characters breaking their silence to talk about what should be left unspoken, with the particular irony that in this text the characters talk about and to a character called Silence. The dialogue I examine addresses identity and the meaning of signs – a theme which has emerged very clearly in the other texts examined. If courtly conduct is predicated on silence, then a premium is placed on the interpretation of signs.

The *Roman de Silence* dates from the second half of the thirteenth century, and survives in only one manuscript.<sup>168</sup> The plot tells of Silence, the daughter of Eufemie and Cador, who are forced to hide her sex thanks to the laws of King Eban, who will only let men inherit. Christening her Silentius rather than Silentia, their scheme goes to plan until Silence runs away as a young woman, joining a troupe of minstrels, and gaining fame as a knight. The text ends with Silence having to ward off the advances of Eban's wife, Queen Eufeme who then lies, telling the king Silence tried to rape her. In a bid to clear her name, Silence is sent to find Merlin, and on her return to court with Merlin is revealed as a woman – as only a woman could capture him. Eufeme, the deceitful queen, is executed and Eban promptly marries Silence.

---

<sup>168</sup> Silence: *A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. by Roche-Mahdi, p.xi.

As is clear from this brief overview, the text centres on silence, both as a character trait and in the person of its eponymous hero(ine). There is play on gender throughout, with Silence referred to as both she and he, and the final scenes addressing the 'proper' place for a woman within courtly society.<sup>169</sup> It ends with Silence confirmed as a woman and a queen, an opportunity only given her thanks to the 'gender instability' Silence embodies – she snares Merlin because she is a woman, but is sent to find him, and copes during her exile, because she acts like a man. As Krueger argues, a key element of this text is 'an exploration of the *ambiguity and indeterminacy* of language and of gender'.<sup>170</sup>

The dialogue I shall examine features personifications of Reason, Nature and Nurture, and Silence herself. This debate is the first time that Silence's identity has been discussed with her. The tension between speech and silence is balanced with a tension between what is identified as masculine or feminine and with class considerations, although this latter point will not be my primary focus here.<sup>171</sup>

Nature's complaint is that she created in Silence the most beautiful woman she could, an attribute which has prompted jealousy and love.<sup>172</sup>

.m. femes a en ceste vie

Ki de toi ont moult grant envie

---

<sup>169</sup> To avoid confusion I shall refer to Silence as 'she' throughout.

<sup>170</sup> Krueger, *Women Readers*, p. 112.

<sup>171</sup> Sturges argues that the 'class issue resurfaces to drive the plot in *Silence* each time Silence has to decide whether she should be gendered male or female. She recognizes quite clearly that women have been constituted as a subservient *class*, and it is on the basis of that consideration that she regularly chooses to remain crossdressed'. 'The Crossdresser and the *Juventus*', p. 46.

<sup>172</sup> All translations mine.

Por le bialté qu'eles i voient (2513-15)

There are a thousand women alive who are very envious of you, for the beauty that they see in you.

Nature lists the activities which are proper for a young man, which Silence should cease immediately ('Lancier, ne traire, ne berser', 2526, jousting, hunting, shooting arrows); she follows this with a list of appropriate activities:

"Va en la cambre a la costure,

Cho violt de nature li us.

Tu nen es pas Scilentius!" (2528-30)

'Stay indoors and sew, that is what nature wants from you. You are not Silentius!'

Nature links labels with (gendered) activities, she equates visual signs with the correct linguistic labels and denies Silence her identity as Silentius without giving her any alternative. Nature doesn't take account of the complexities of cross-dressing, which provides the subject with a layer of silent signals, blurring those of the body – as Clark points out, 'the transvestite is a potential figure of category crisis that not only blurs gender boundaries but also undermines the whole attempt to construct stable binary categories of oppositional difference'.<sup>173</sup> Silence is caught between Nature, Nurture, and the silent signals of her male identity. At this stage in the dialogue, Silence has had Silentius removed from her without a feminine name to consider. This confusion is evident in Silence's response:

E cil respont: "Tel n'oï onques!

---

<sup>173</sup> Clark, 'Queering Gender and Naturalizing Class', p. 53.

Silencius! Qui sui jo donques?

Silencius ai non, jo cui,

U jo sui altres que ne fui. (2531-34)

And he responded: 'I've never heard such a thing! Not Silencius! Who am I then? I think Silencius is my name, or I am another, which I have never been.

If Silence (and Nature) are unable to give this new identity a name, then it is quite literally outside Silence's ability to conceive of it: language and truth go hand in hand – if something is accurately named, its nature will reflect the language used to describe it.<sup>174</sup> It seems that the opposition between the differing gender models of masculinity and femininity, or nurture versus nature, is too stark for them to be digested. Even the narrator creates opposition, describing Nature's arguments as sophism (2541, 'sofime'), while shortly afterwards describing Silence's masculine activities as savage (2546, 'salvage'). Nurture's arrival increases the confusion, with Silence referred to several times as 'he' (2548, 2549, 2550). Silence tells Nurture that he has been persuaded by Nature, and that he must stop behaving unnaturally (2554, 'pas natureus'). No longer masculine, Silence now refers to herself as a woman:

Ainc feme, voir, de mon parage,

Ne mena mais si fait usage (2555-56)

No woman, it is true, of my lineage, ever behaved in this way.

Silence renounces masculine activities, and associates these activities – which are unspoken signs – with unpleasant language and taunts. As Krueger suggests,

---

<sup>174</sup> See Bloch's discussion of language and orthodoxy in 'Silence and Holes', pp. 85-88.

Silence categorises 'nature' into the constraints of class; while, as Gaunt argues, the supremacy of nature over nurture is privileged from the outset.<sup>175</sup>

Silence's physical femininity, hidden beneath her clothes, led to ambiguous signs. Able to communicate on only one level with her male peers (the level of external signs), she was taunted whenever she refused to disrobe, since she knew that her body would be (correctly) interpreted in a way at odds with her clothing and activities:

Dont dient tuit mi compaignon:

'Cis avra moult le cuer felon

Se il vit longhes entressait.' (2567-69)

All my companions say this: 'This one will have a cowardly heart, if he lives long enough'.

Nurture's defence against the call of Nature is that she has changed Silence through force of habit. Nurture has succeeded in turning a girl into a 'malvais home' (2602, inferior man), so her analysis of the situation is similar to the one provided by Silence herself, in that the ruse succeeds on two levels of visual signs, activities and clothing, but not on a deeper or more lasting level, since even she acknowledges that Silence is female ('Jo l'ai tolte desnaturee', 2595, I have completely denatured her). The ideas explored here about the body, the psyche and the way in which gender is constructed are still debated by modern feminists, who emphasise, just as *Silence* does, the dominant nature of the prevailing

---

<sup>175</sup> Krueger, *Women Readers*, pp. 116-21; Gaunt, 'The Significance of Silence', p. 205.

masculine discourse.<sup>176</sup> Silence, Brahney underlines, is caught between Nature and society; she uses language to manage situations rather than the fighting skills she has obtained during her time as a man, and demonstrates that ‘were she freed from the constraints of society, woman’s capacity for development would be unlimited’.<sup>177</sup>

The dominance of the masculine way of life is underlined by the appearance of Reason (*Raison*) who breaks the stalemate by reminding Silence of the benefits of her life as a man and equates a gender switch to killing herself – as, of course, it would be, on a linguistic level, since her identity as Silentius would be erased in favour of the female Silentia (2611, ‘Que poi li valt mains de la mort’). The link between nature, behaviour, and position in the courtly world is clearly articulated by Reason, who sets out the consequences of Silence’s choice. The motivation for Silence’s silence about her gender is the question of inheritance, and Reason puts her finger on this:

Ne cuidiés pas li rois vos mete  
En l’onor, por estre parjure,  
S’il aperçoit vostre nature. (2622-24)

Do you think the king will give you the land, and perjure himself, if he realises your real nature?

By this stage the link between actions, language and identity is taken as given by each character; however, there is little clarity about Silence’s position. Having

---

<sup>176</sup> See, for example, Showalter, ‘Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness’, pp. 14-20.

<sup>177</sup> Brahney, ‘When *Silence* Was Golden, p. 57.

declared that she would like to follow Nature's lead and embrace femininity, abandoning the tricky balance of physical femininity and masculine speech, clothing and actions, Silence is now referred to by the narrator as a man.<sup>178</sup> Crucially, these references to her masculinity come just as Silence is considering Reason's input. The narrator links rational thought with masculinity, making it obvious that Silence will for the moment ignore the pull of the feminine – the feminine is described by the narrator as 'bad advice' (2628, 'fol conseil'). The narrator emphasizes the point by saying that the male life is better than the female (2637, 'Et voit que moils valt li us d'ome').

The closing contribution to the debate comes from Silence. Gender ambiguity is reflected throughout the eighteen lines in which she sorts through the pull between Nature, Nurture and Reason; rationally, the masculine and its renunciation of speech is best, but the temptation to return to her nature and the feminine is huge:

Or sui jo moult vallans et pros.

Nel sui, par foi, ains sui honis

Quant as femes voel estre onis. (2642-44)

Now I am valiant and worthy. No I am not, by god, I am dishonoured when I want to become one of the women.

Her appearance - the one sign she can control, if she remains silent - pushes her toward the masculine ('Trop dure boche ai por baisier', 2646, I have too harsh a mouth for kissing). Silence's resolve to be a man is a calculation based on her position in society:

---

<sup>178</sup> Lines 2625, 2626, 2632, 2640.



Car vallés sui et nient mescine.

Ne voel perdre ma grant honor. (2650-51)

Since I am a young man and not a maid. I don't want to lose my position.

Silence breaks her silence to discuss her identity, but returns to the status quo, acknowledging the pull of the feminine but assessing the pros and cons of femininity and masculinity based on the social mores in which she is trapped.<sup>179</sup> Struggling to articulate a new identity without the language to define it, Silence ends her contribution by siding with Reason and Nurture:

Por quanque puet faire Nature

Ja n'en ferai descoverture. (2655-56)

Whatever Nature may do, I'll never reveal the secret.

Having participated in a debate which articulates her 'secret' by breaking it down into competing personifications, Silence is determined to retreat into masculinity and silence, albeit she remains a woman – in some ways she represents a third way between the poles of Nature and Nurture. Ironically, fearing the feminine thanks to its inferiority and exclusion from the masculine world of power, Silence chooses a position which will make her an outsider.<sup>180</sup> In breaking her silence, she

---

<sup>179</sup> As argued by Perret in 'Travesties et Transsexuelles', p. 329: 'Le scénario du travestissement, qui libère la femme des contraintes de son sexe, se termine dans une impasse, comme si ces textes exploraient les possibilités de rôles sexuels différents et le problème de l'identité sexuelle et sociale de la femme, pour finir par renforcer le *status quo*'.

<sup>180</sup> As Allen discusses in 'The Ambiguity of Silence', p. 107: 'The relationship of usage and custom to language is precisely what is at issue in *Silence*. Silence, by means of an evasive name, must try to escape the sentences of death and disinheritance which are laid down for her, but all her efforts to escape from the system only reveal her inability to do so'.

articulates a secret that threatens her public identity; language allows her to evaluate her place in the masculine hierarchy, but she is unable to find a way to use language to protect her position and align sex and gender. Silence performs masculinity, and to do so successfully she must embody silence, hiding behind language – ‘to speak of silence is to betray the very principle’.<sup>181</sup> Once gender, language, and the visual match up, she is reabsorbed into the patriarchal system, married to Eban: ‘Now an heiress, Silence is transformed into the most marriageable woman in the realm’.<sup>182</sup> Kinoshita’s argument that the *Roman de Silence* must be understood in terms of the ‘social institutions and practices by which feudal society reproduced itself’ has force, but I suggest that Silence’s movement through the politics of courtly society can be traced through her use of dialogue, the one tool needed to navigate through an impossible dilemma.<sup>183</sup>

## Conclusion

Silence and secrecy are a recurring theme within courtly lyric and narrative texts; their frequency is testament to their significance as part of the courtly process. Without secrecy, courtly love loses a central plank of its *raison d’être*, and this centrality is even more pertinent in the context of dialogue. Dialogue lyrics in Occitan and in Old French display similar characteristics: both rely on silence and secrecy as a theme, taking up this concern from the *cansos* and *chansons* and making it their own. When placed in the context of dialogue, silence and secrecy take on greater significance, since a framework of two (or more) voices talking about silence and secrecy only increases the pressure on this motif. Multiple voices

---

<sup>181</sup> Mason Cooper, ‘Elle and L’, p. 360.

<sup>182</sup> Kinoshita, ‘Male-Order Brides’, p. 71.

<sup>183</sup> Kinoshita, ‘Heldris de Cornuälle’s Roman de Silence’, p. 397.

debating silence and secrecy have a particular piquancy, giving the theme a tone of quiet irony but also a theoretical preoccupation which comes out very clearly in the lyrics.

The Occitan and Old French lyrics' poetic voices are aware of the courtly tradition in which they sing, and this informs the way they approach the motif. They are, in essence, debating the theory of courtly love, considering the framework in which a good courtly lover operates. These lyrics break the basic tenet of courtly love – it must remain secret – creating a circular dynamic where poetic voices can only discuss silence and secrecy by breaking the very silence they claim to espouse. The lyrics use silence as a communicative medium, dominating the triangular dynamic between the lover, his (masculine) interlocutor, and his silent lady. Silence and secrecy within lyric dialogue thus become a motif which presents the poetic voices as sophisticated, and plays on control. The sophisticated lover, the lover who is in control, uses his mastery of language and of silence to communicate with his lady, retaining his position within the courtly hierarchy.

The use of silence and secrecy within the narrative texts is very different. Silence becomes, here, associated with two approaches: either inexperience, the exact opposite of the silence as sophistication seen in the lyrics, or discretion. Dialogue about courtly love within narrative is often where naïve, unsophisticated characters can explore their emotions. Typically, these characters do not even recognize the emotion they feel, nor are they equipped to deal with its implications. They use silence and secrecy to shield their feelings from others. The characters use language – again, breaking their silence – to explore and regulate alien emotions, so that by the end of the dialogue (which often takes place within monologue) their

emotions have returned to an ordered state. The use of dialectic and dialogue allows characters to examine feelings or concepts which by their nature may well include paradox and opposition.

Silence and secrecy are also linked to discretion in many narratives. The necessity of silence to protect a love affair is the hinge upon which several narratives rest. This prerequisite is often set out by the lady at the start of the affair, lending the texts a sense of inevitability as the affair moves toward revelation and an unhappy end. The lovers who espouse silence and secrecy as discretion are not inexperienced – they have far more in common with the poetic voices of the lyrics, since they welcome courtly love and understand its rules. Unlike the lyric voices they only aspire to control over language and silence, since events quickly overtake their purported grip on these two elements, leading to unfortunate results. The gap between the characters' knowledge and that of the extra-textual audience gives narrative texts real dramatic impetus – as that audience, we become implicated in the drama of silence and secrecy unfolding in front of us, which by its very nature betrays the very secrecy the characters strive to maintain.<sup>184</sup>

The impact of feminine voices or characters when they do break their silence is debatable. The two feminine characters in *En aquel temps* seem to break their silence only to be characterized as two halves of a very masculine stereotype, the 'good' lady versus the 'bad'. Despite participating in a lengthy debate, the narrative ends with them still discussing the judgment, with no resolution. They remain

---

<sup>184</sup> As Miller sets out, with reference to the novel, 'we enjoy our privacy in the act of watching privacy being violated...It is built into the structure of the Novel that every reader must realize the definitive fantasy of the liberal subject, who imagines himself free from the surveillance that he nonetheless sees operating everywhere around him'. *The Novel and the Police*, p. 163.

shackled to a masculine world – in which a masculine judgment regulates their conduct - so the impact of their speech must be questioned. Silence's dialogue, with its play on gender, identity and language (as well as the emphasis on visual signs, given her position in a world where language is manifestly unstable) is very different from the rest of the corpus I have considered; gender and language are entwined, and Silence's participation in the debate over her future allows her to articulate the different models of masculinity and femininity through which she must navigate.

Silence and secrecy are at the heart of courtly literature. Always linked to control, they are used to expand the poetic voice's sphere of influence in the lyrics, or to wrest back control when a character is faced with a new emotion, as in some narratives. Narratives in which silence is linked to discretion use the back and forth between language and silence to illustrate the shifting positions, or shifting control, which their characters undergo. These varying approaches to silence and secrecy all return to the central paradox of courtly literature: silence is central to the operation of courtly love, but so is breaking one's silence.

## Chapter Three

### Monologue as Dialogue

#### Introduction

This chapter considers dialogue within monologue, in lyric and narrative texts. The Occitan lyric corpus contains a number of *cansos* which are monologues, but which feature aspects of dialogue; this can also be seen in some monologues in Old French and Occitan narratives. These aspects of dialogue take two principal forms: the rhetorical question, and internal dialogue. The rhetorical question (defined as ‘implying strong affirmation or denial’) is a device which implies a response, giving a sense of suggested dialogue.<sup>185</sup> The use of the rhetorical question by the primary speaking voice creates a dynamic in which the answer to the question is implied; it can be supplied by the primary voice itself, or supplied by the intervention of a secondary voice which can be characterised as an anonymous figment of the poetic psyche, or as the personification of an external emotion such as Love. Finally, internal dialogue is a more clear-cut category, where a monologue becomes definable voices. While most internal dialogues contain two voices, this is not exclusively the case, with some lyrics and narratives containing three poetic voices depending on how the text is read.

The breakdown of the single speaking voice into suggested or internal dialogue can be seen in the work of several troubadours active between 1150 and 1200, including Raimbaut d'Aurenga; Peire Rogier; Bernart de Ventadorn; Giraut de Bornelh; and Gaucelm Faidit. Gace Brulé, a trouvère active between c.1175 and 1213, uses suggested dialogue, and is therefore included in my corpus. The

---

<sup>185</sup> Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, p. 46.

romances *Lancelot*, *Erec et Enide*, and *Cligès*, the Occitan narrative *Flamenca*, the Old French *Narcissus et Dané*, and *La Chasteleine de Vergy* also utilise formal devices which, I will argue, create suggested dialogue within their characters' monologues. Written at a time when courtly lyric production was in full flow, the narratives' use of dialogue is likely to have been – at the very least – influenced by that seen in the courtly lyrics. Lastly, the troubairitz the Comtessa de Dia, Lombarda and Castelloza use suggested dialogue, but very differently from the masculine authors, creating a distinct world in which frustrated dialogue is a central motivation for their texts. Their lyrics address the feminine voices' *amics* directly, using formal techniques to create implied dialogue.

The corpus examined in this chapter is united by its use of dialogue within monologue. Nonetheless, it is possible to split the corpus into two broad sections: the lyrics present a more knowing approach to courtly love, the narratives a more naïve one. The challenges of reading *cansos* which feature dialogic forms are twofold: first, it can be hard to differentiate between one or more speaking voices, with different editors discerning different patterns in some lyrics. Secondly, unlike the often clear differentiation between the narrator and the characters in narrative texts, differentiating between the speaker and the author in lyric texts is a challenge; a conflation of the speaking voice and poet can be seen in several lyrics. This difficulty leads to another question highlighted in this chapter: what is the poetic voice? Monologue as dialogue highlights the role of dialogue in the formation of the poetic subject, and challenges the concept of the courtly subject as a unified, single voice. The role of dialogue in the construction of the speaking 'I' is addressed in this chapter; I will argue that dialogic structures are more prevalent within monologue than perhaps acknowledged thus far.

The narrative monologues, on the other hand, use the same formal devices to present characters either less knowing or who wish to appear less knowing, and therefore less in control, than those of the lyrics. The character who speaks in the narrative monologues thus has a different relationship to knowledge of love from that of the lyric subject; narrative characters either begin with ignorance and move toward a more informed conclusion, or appear to do so while undercut by irony. Far from the familiarity with love and the courtly process seen in the lyrics, the narrative monologues are put into the mouths of characters genuinely alienated or disenfranchised, or who appear to be so. This creates a different relationship between conscious and unconscious knowledge, and between the knowledge of the external audience and the character themselves, or the narrator and the character. The chapter will therefore consider the corpus in two distinct sections, lyric and narrative, considering how dialogue within monologue plays out across the texts in the two genres.

I shall ask how the treatment of dialogue as monologue differs between lyric and narrative texts, and how the rhetorical devices I have identified function in these genres. What happens when a text contains suggested dialogue in the form of questions, whether resolved or unresolved, or internal dialogue, which can include questions answered with questions, as well as questions and answers? The use of dialogue – whether suggested or overt – highlights the quest for a ‘truth’ at the heart of debate, and this search for a truth within courtly love has particular implications for the audience when suggested or internal dialogue is used. I will ask how the relationship between an audience and the speaking voice(s), and between conscious and unconscious knowledge, functions when implied or internal dialogue



is deployed, and how the gender of the poetic voice alters the dynamic of such texts.

I argue that this type of dialogue interpellates its external audience via questions to which the audience may know the answer. The balance of knowledge between the poetic voice(s) and their audience(s) and / or addressees is a key element of this type of dialogue, and is particularly pertinent in those monologues where the characters are depicted as unknowing, as in the narratives. I shall ask what impact this inequality of knowledge has on the way the dialogues play out. Sometimes the narrative characters could even be described as using these dialogue forms to retain control; precisely how helpless they are is something I shall explore.

### **Section One: Troubadour Lyrics**

This section considers eight troubadour lyrics and one trouvère lyric, all of which feature rhetorical questions, apostrophe, and internal dialogue. I will take them in two sections: first, those which use what I call – following Storme’s term – suggested dialogue.<sup>186</sup> I will then look at those which feature internal dialogue. Consideration of the first group of lyrics will allow me to identify how these devices create what Storme describes (when considering Giraut de Bornelh’s work) as ‘an atmosphere of dialogue’, before moving on to those lyrics which feature what is more easily identifiable as internal dialogue.<sup>187</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> Storme, ‘Suggested Dialogue in the Poetry of Giraut de Bornelh’, pp. 341-43.

<sup>187</sup> Storme, p. 341.

The corpus I shall consider in this section is: 'Braiz, chans, quils, critz' (PC 389.21) and 'Donna, cel qe.us es bos amics' (PC 389.1) by Raimbaut d'Aurenga; 'Amors, e que.us es veyaire?' (PC 70.4) by Bernart de Ventadorn; 'No sai don chant, e chantars plagra.m fort' (PC 356.5) and 'Tant ai mon cor e joy assis' (PC 356.9) by Peire Rogier; 'Sol qu'amors me plevis' (PC 242.76) and 'Se ia d'Amor' (PC 242.69a) by Giraut de Bornelh; 'd'un dotç bell plaser' (PC 167.21) by Gaucelm Faidit, and Gace Brulé's 'De Bone Amour et de Leaul Amie'.

The five lyrics which feature suggested dialogue via the formal devices of the apostrophe and the rhetorical question are 'Donna, cel qe.us es bos amics' by Raimbaut d'Aurenga; 'Amors, e que.us es veyaire?' by Bernart de Ventadorn; 'Sol qu'amors me plevis' and 'Se ia d'Amor' by Giraut de Bornelh; and 'De Bone Amour et de Leaul Amie' by Gace Brulé. The suggested dialogue within these lyrics raises questions about the relationship between the subject and its addressee, with each lyric considering an aspect of courtly love, and doing so whilst tacitly implicating its external audience. The implications of this particular audience / addressee – poetic voice dynamic, as well as the impact of a subject who can be described as hesitant, will be the primary focus of this section. As Storme suggests (in relation to Giraut de Bornelh's lyrics), these lyrics contain an abundance of 'hesitations, contradictions, and questions'.<sup>188</sup>

'Donna, cel qe.us es bos amics', by Raimbaut d'Aurenga, is a lyric which directly addresses or apostrophises the speaking voice's lady.<sup>189</sup> The interest in this lyric lies in the way the subject deploys a series of apostrophes and rhetorical questions

---

<sup>188</sup> Storme, p. 341.

<sup>189</sup> Pattison's edition and translation cited.

which he resolves by supplying the answers himself. These formal devices and the way the poetic voice encompasses both parts of a suggested conversation give the lyric a real sense of dialogue, borrowing the rhythm of a conversation which is established in the opening lines, in which the Lady is clearly implicated as the poetic voice's addressee. The speaking voice addresses his *domna*, stating:

Donna, cel qe.us es bos amics,  
 A cui vos etz mals et enics,  
 Vos clama merce d'una re:  
 C'aujaz so qe.us vol dir per be (1-4)

Lady, he who is a good friend to you, toward whom you are harsh and cruel, asks favour of you on one matter: that you hear well what he would like to tell you.

The subject sets out his stall from the beginning of the lyric: he speaks directly to his lady and, tacitly, to his (masculine?) peers. He continues in the same style, with the repetition of *Donna* seventeen times, giving this lyric an insistent tone which increases as the lyric progresses.<sup>190</sup> Apostrophe goes hand in hand with the use of the personal pronoun – *vos* is used 46 times through the lyric.<sup>191</sup> The lyric remains firmly in the realm of suggested dialogue, with the subject conjuring up the image of his lady, while simultaneously denying her any response. He uses questions and answers to create a circular process involving only one voice, with the lady kept silent despite the fact that his questions are ostensibly addressed to her. By the second half of the lyric the situation is more complex; the speaking voice addresses

<sup>190</sup> Lines 1, 11, 63, 111, 119, 121, 127, 132, 133, 137, 141, 147, 153, 159, 173, 177, 185.

<sup>191</sup> Lines 2, 3, 11, 28, 29, 37, 39, 42, 50, 58, 60, 64, 65, 73, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 86, 87, 89, 93, 115, 120, 123, 129, 130, 132, 135, 142, 143, 146, 148, 152, 153, 156, 159, 164, 172, 173, 177, 178, 182, 185, 187.

not just his lady but also *Amors*. The personification of love is addressed eleven times,<sup>192</sup> and the poetic voice blends references to his lady with those to *Amors*. The conventional opening soon gives way to the frustration of a speaking voice who is trapped by the twin forces of *Amors* and his lady:

Ges la plaga no par defora,  
Mas dinz lo cor m'art et acora (55-56)

The wound is nowise visible externally but within me it sears me and eats my heart.

He continues:

Ja no.us en calgra Amor blandir ? -  
Donna, non puosc ab toz contendre:  
Vos pregar et Amor defendre. (62-64)

Wouldn't it be advantageous for you to soften Love? Lady, I can't contend with all: make my plea to you and struggle with Love.

The poetic voice is caught between three poles: the external audience, his lady, and Love (this last a personification to whom he refers throughout the lyric). Caught in the middle of these latter two, *pregar* (64) suggests a more conventional approach to courtly love in which the subject woos his Lady; however, this is caught between the two poles of *contendre* / *defendre* (63/64); both verbs suggest a subject using language as a weapon, in defence against Love's attack, and in offense against his target, the Lady. His attempt to court his Lady is set against a backdrop of linguistic aggression, with the poetic voice asking his Lady to intervene on his behalf. He

---

<sup>192</sup> Lines 23,28,33,41,49,60,62,64,66,69,92.

presents himself as a lone knight in a hostile world, reliant on his ability to articulate himself to be successful. Answering his own question, the poetic voice states that he cannot succeed unless Love helps him, but Love doesn't allow him to heal (65-70). As Topsfield has argued, '*Amors* has become for Raimbaut the allegory of the powerful tyranny exercised on him in order to make him conform to the conventional courtly frustrations and deceits imposed by the *domna*...Raimbaut is looking for an individual and secret way to happiness, outside courtly society, with a *domna* who will be loyal and trustworthy'.<sup>193</sup> The speaking voice's bitterness increases as he asks why he does not praise her beauty:

Donna, car en mos dich no.us lau

Ni vostra beltat no mentau? (111-12)

Lady, why don't I praise you in my works or mention your beauty?

The response is simple: in refusing to speak of her beauty, the poet takes the only revenge open to him whilst, of course, showing his audience how beautiful she is. Asking whether the lady believes she is as beautiful as the mirror tells her (122-23), the speaking voice immediately responds by labeling her '*folla si o crezez*' (124, quite mad if you believe it). What is crucial here is the redundancy of any response from the lady herself – the poetic voice supplies the answer, and the lady remains silent. Her role is as a catalyst for the poetic voice's internal dialogue, not an active participant in the conversation.

This lyric presents a speaking voice who uses apostrophe and the rhetorical question to express invective, in a triangular dynamic between the poetic voice, his

---

<sup>193</sup> Topsfield, *Troubadours and Love*, p. 150.

lady and Love. This is not lyric about a subject who is lost, rudderless and in love for the first time; this is an experienced lover (13-16) whose contract with Love has gone awry, leaving him railing against the unhappiness to which his lady and Love have condemned him, when he thought he was in control of the courtly process.

In contrast, Bernart de Ventadorn's 'Amors, e que.us es veyaire?' uses rhetorical questions to emphasise the subject's wish to prostrate himself before Love, submitting entirely to its guidance.<sup>194</sup> This lyric exemplifies Bernart's ability to take courtly motifs and articulate them sincerely, but with a twist: the rhetorical questions addressed to Love allow the poetic voice to create his own slant on love within the courtly conventions he espouses.<sup>195</sup>

The opening stanza places the speaking voice in a position of inferiority before the omnipotent *Amors*:

Trobatz mais fol mas can me?  
Cuidatz vos qu'eu si'amaire  
e que ja no trop merce? (2-4)

Have you ever found someone more foolish than me? Do you think that I should love without ever finding mercy?

---

<sup>194</sup> Lazar, ed., *Bernard de Ventadour* cited; translation my own.

<sup>195</sup> Lazar describes his style thus: 'Mais tous ces motifs et les autres qui lui sont propres, se présentent chez Bernard de Ventadour avec de tels accents de sincérité et une telle profusion d'expressions originales, qu'ils portent le cachet particulier de leur auteur et ne peuvent nullement être confondus avec ceux d'autres troubadours'. Lazar, *Bernard de Ventadour*, p. 9.

Unlike the assessment of the lady in 'Donna, cel qe.us es bos amics', stanza two calls the poet's lady 'plus de bon aire / del mon' (9-10, the most beautiful in the world). Even the assertion that Love has betrayed the subject's 'bona fe' (15, good faith) belies the impression that the situation in which he finds himself is after all not too uncomfortable. By stanza three, the tone becomes more litigious: the poet declares that he will have to 'contendre' (17, dispute) with Love, since he is so wounded that this is the only course left to him. Love is described as knowing how to compensate for unfair treatment; the vocabulary of the law and the market has crept in to what was pure emotion. Above all, the poet's enslavement to Love continues despite his wish to establish a bargain:

Que nuls om no pot ni auza

Enves Amor contrastar (35-36)

No man can nor dares to oppose Love.

The final stanza (VII) and the first *tornada* (VIII) contain direct appeals to his Lady, giving the lyric a neat frame of apostrophes. It opens with a direct address to Love, and closes with one to his lady, the two poles between which the poetic voice swings. The legal vocabulary and the direct address to Love as the ultimate judge give the lyric the air of a court scene in which the subject protests his sincerity.<sup>196</sup>

E si vos amassetz tan,

Alres vos n'avengr'a dire (59-60)

And if you loved that much, you would speak differently.

---

<sup>196</sup> See lines 1-2; 15-16; 17; 23-24.

The lyric unfolds from the opening rhetorical question, using this formal device and the apostrophe to create an atmosphere of dialogue. Bernart's poetic voice speaks to an *Amors* who constrains him to love even though he has not been rewarded with *merce*; however, he remains hopeful that his lady and Love will recognize the force of his address. This is certainly a lyric in which the subject takes the game of love seriously; the formal devices are used to support his case, not inserted by the author to create distance or inject much if any humour into his dilemma.<sup>197</sup> The argument remains coherent and focused, with the poetic voice concentrated on its desired outcome, and consistent in its self-presentation.

In contrast, in Giraut de Bornelh's 'Sol qu'Amors me plevis', we see both rhetorical questions and internal dialogue, with a fractured poetic voice which poses an interpretational challenge to its audience.<sup>198</sup> Here the single-voice lyric becomes two voices, giving internal dialogue within a monologic frame. This lyric is another complaint against Love, with the primary poetic voice arguing that Love and his lady should reward his loyal service.

The opening stanzas (one and two) are a conventional exposition of a lover's plight. He has served his lady – whose courtly qualities he does not doubt – without complaint, and wants to be recognised as her lover or servant (51, 'servidor'). As Gaunt argues, Giraut is a poet unafraid to criticise his lady and the dynamic of good

---

<sup>197</sup> See Gaunt, *Troubadours and Irony*, p. 146, which elaborates on Giraut de Bornelh's poetic persona.

<sup>198</sup> See Paterson, *Troubadours and Eloquence*, pp. 88-101 for a fuller discussion of Giraut de Bornelh's approach to *trobar clus* and *trobar leu*. Version and translation cited is Sharman, ed., *The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil*.



lover versus bad lady is at work in this lyric.<sup>199</sup> The speaking voice asks Love to keep her promises to the lover:

Sol qu'Amors me plevis

Qu'aissi quo.l fora fis

1-2

If Love would vow to keep his promises to me in as far as I were loyal to him.

This opening hypothesis, of a just and balanced courtly system, asserted with confidence by the primary poetic voice, begins to change in stanza three. In this stanza the primary voice fractures into internal dialogue with an un-named second poetic voice ('S'om m'enquier', 35, If someone asks me); they discuss how the primary voice knows that his lady will reward him once he has told her of his feelings. The dialogue continues into stanza four as the two voices debate her beauty and the primary voice's boldness in speaking, with the dialogue suggesting a moment of uncertainty about the merits of this course of action.

The lyric's evolution into internal dialogue can be read as a loss of control, with the primary voice unable to contain the multiple voices competing for his attention. However, I suggest that the lyric's overall theme is one of power, and that the use of internal dialogue gives this lyric control over its subject matter. The two speaking voices engage in a knowing debate which gives them control over the lyric's direction, and the internal dialogue is a means of expressing the dialectic between certainty and uncertainty (' - Qu'as dig?', 57, What have you said?); long service and rapid reward, ('Qu'om totz sos ans / Don per dos o tres semblans!', 12-13, a man must give all the years of his life for two or three [of his lady's] looks); speech

---

<sup>199</sup> Gaunt, *Troubadours and Irony*, p. 148.

and silence, ('Pus que mon cor dig l'agues / Tot sai de ver que ma bon'escharida', 32-33, Once I had told her my feelings, good fortune would soon be mine without fail); and the joy and pain of love. Crucially, the two voices establish this dialectic, engage in debate about it, and create two potential outcomes which are explored through the lyric, with the audience able to interpret the situation in two ways, but the tension is resolved by the end of the lyric. As in a motet, the competing voices open up a space in which more than one interpretational approach is suggested.<sup>200</sup>

The gap between the voices is seen as they take up opposing positions on the lady's ability to recognise the primary voice's worth and his ability correctly to interpret her looks and be sure he is acting in the right way (' – E cum? Es tan plazens?', 37, How is that? Is it [her face] so pleasing?) and on whether he should speak out (' – Qu'as dig? No saps quals s'es?', 57, What have you said? Do you not know who this lady is?). The tension between timidity and boldness, wisdom and folly runs throughout the lyric, with Love referred to in the opening two stanzas and in the *tornada* as a distinct entity. Love acts as a consistent figure which anchors the lyric, just as the refrain does in a motet.<sup>201</sup> Keeping Love at the centre of the lyric (Love directs the poetic voice and, indirectly, the Lady) allows the two voices to explore their emotions, contrasting the formal plea to Love with the more informal dialogue. Again, this approach is reminiscent of the way in which motets or refrains operate, using different genres to reference an emotional and generic shorthand whose contrasts contribute to the audience's understanding of the text.

---

<sup>200</sup> As Huot points out in relation to the motet, 'This is the true sense of textual, or literary, polyphony as developed in the vernacular: not merely a chorus of voices, but a proliferation of poetic languages, a plethora of interpretive lenses through which the composition takes on now one aspect, now another'. *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet*, p. 192.

<sup>201</sup> Butterfield's discussion of the motet, and the use of refrains, argues that 'refrains form stable, yet also highly flexible, overlapping structures...this formal flexibility stimulates various kinds of amplification within different genres, allowing new possibilities of meaning by association and parody'. *Poetry and Music*, p. 104.

It is clear that each voice is aware of the primary voice's position, and of his lady's, so the antithesis between their stances does not come from a gap between their levels of knowledge. Rather, it is a means of exploring the primary voice's approach to this particular conundrum and how he can resolve it; as Salverda de Grave has observed about Giraut de Bornelh, 'nous avons essayé de montrer comment la conception de la poésie qu'il tenait du milieu clerical, entrain en lutte avec son besoin d'une expression plus spontanée de ses sentiments'. This tension between two approaches to courtly love, Salverda de Grave's 'conflit entre deux forces', can be seen here, the author using two poetic voices to articulate the tension at its heart.<sup>202</sup> The overall effect is knowing; this is reinforced by the reference to the lady's speech, which is 'parlars cortes' (74, courtly speech), the key attribute that drew the primary voice to her. This remark underlines the mood of a courtly game with experienced participants, as does the primary voice's rhetorical question in stanza five, 'E qu'en dires / Vos autres amans?' (82-83, and what will you other lovers have to say?). The primary voice situates himself within a larger group which will respond to interpellation – interpellation prompted by the second person verb form and the use of *vos*, a dual emphasis leaving no room for doubt. Drawing on a set of (masculine) peers is of course not an option for his lady, who is trapped by the dialogue between the masculine voices, *Amors*, and other lovers. His response to this rhetorical question is to reassert his lady's courtly qualities ('No.us pes / Si ai saubut chاوزir a ma partida / Tal qu'anc no fon de be far adurmida', 83-85, Do not let it vex you if I have wisely chosen for myself a lady who was never slow with fine and courtly deeds). As with the internal dialogue, this is superficially an open question, immediately closed down by his response.

---

<sup>202</sup> Salverda de Grave, *Observations sur l'art lyrique de Giraut de Bornelh*, p. 95.

The primary voice sets up a world in which form and content combine to his advantage: the lady is to blame for his suit, albeit silent and unaware; and internal dialogue allows the primary voice to explore the contradictions this predicament raises whilst retaining control over the process. The emphasis throughout the lyric is on his lowly station in life: 'mon servir', 15, my service; 'humilmens', 20, humbly; 'servidor', 51, servant; 'per far sos mandamens', 54, to do her bidding; 'que tant gent m'a conquis', 70, who has conquered me so graciously; 'humils e merceians', 81, humble and suppliant. This ostensible lack of status is contrasted not just with his lady's power, but also with his ability to discuss and decide the outcome of the lyric's key question with an interlocutor whose hesitations and interjections seem designed to boost the confidence of this primary voice. As Storme suggests, Giraut's use of dialogue provides an 'underlying unity', allowing him to explore the contradictions of love.<sup>203</sup>

A similar move toward control can be seen in Giraut de Bornelh's 'Si ia d'amor'. This lyric features a poetic voice who constructs an elaborate bargain with his lady and with Love, offering them his happiness and service if they will agree to his request for 'lauzor / ni ghizado ni grat' (2-3, praise, reward or thanks). The opening stanza contains a poetic voice ignored by Love – but instead of submitting himself to the will of Love and his lady, as courtly convention dictates, he constructs a bargain.<sup>204</sup> Opening the stanza (and lyric) with an 'if' clause, the poetic voice establishes a conditional, speculative tone in which he is the petitioning party:

---

<sup>203</sup> Storme, p. 341.

<sup>204</sup> According to Nelli, the core of courtly convention in 1150 'se caractérise surtout par le long service humilié de l'amant'. *L'Érotique des troubadours*, p. 132.

Si ia d'Amor

Poghes aver lauzor (1-2)

If I could ever have praise...from Love.

This plea for clemency is the hinge from which the lyric unfolds, with the poetic voice ending the stanza with a rhetorical question:

Pos de l'auzir seria tant pagatz,

De son benfait que.us seria veiaire? (9-10)

Since I would be so content if Love would [only] listen to me, tell me, how would it strike you [how do you think I would feel] if he were to show me some kindness?

This is answered by a poetic voice who uses the word 'and' to open his next two stanzas, creating a response which emphasises control and lack of it. Building a case for himself which his lady and Love cannot ignore, the poetic voice addresses his lady directly in stanza two:

E si.m secor

Vostre cors cui onor (11-12)

And if your heart helps me, your heart which I so honour.

The poetic voice offers his lady a composite of himself; he has given her his heart, and volunteers the whole gamut of emotions ('fols...senatz / ...gais...pensaie', 19-20, foolish...wise / carefree...pensive) if her heart helps him. Answering his own question, the poetic voice shows how he is both in and out of control: he can be anything his lady requires, but at the same time the fragmentation of the self hinted

at by the list of contrary emotions suggests a poetic voice hovering on the edge of control.

The final stanza opens with another rhetorical question:

A de ricor

El mon enperador

Que valgues la meytat? (31-33)

Is there an emperor in the whole world with wealth worth half of mine?

This question meets with an immediate answer, the poetic voice addressing his lady to say:

No! N'ai pauc galiat;

...Ay! Francha res, cortesa de bon aire,

El mon no es enperis ne regnatz

Que contra vos no.m fos grans paubertatz,

E ab sol vos seria enperaire! (34; 37-40)

No! This is no lie that I have told...oh, noble and courtly lady of gentle birth, there is no empire or kingdom in the world which, in exchange for you, I would not deem great poverty, and having you alone I would be emperor!

This lyric contains a poetic voice who combines self-assurance with nerves. Building his case stanza by stanza from an opening hypothesis, he describes a subject position which veers between confidence (his lady has no equal in this world) and fracture (she has his heart; he will embody any characteristic she

desires). The use of rhetorical questions and the apostrophe can be placed at each end of a spectrum, representing uncertainty and certainty respectively. The subject walks the line here between control of the courtly process and the potential for loss of control, using elements of dialectic within internal dialogue to work his way through the argument and place himself in a position of greater certainty by the end of the lyric.

This approach is also seen in Gace Brulé's 'De Bone Amour et de Leaul Amie'.<sup>205</sup> This renowned trouvère was active in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. He is described as a poet who knew 'tout d'abord transposer avec bonheur les thèmes majeurs de la lyrique d'oc, sa conception de la *fin'amor* et du service d'amour'.<sup>206</sup> 'De Bone Amour' has a poetic voice who laments the loss of his lady, who he will never see again (12, 'Que ne verrai ja mes jor de ma vie'), and asks how he can find comfort when Love strips him of any power. Gace uses rhetorical questions to create suggested dialogue, and refers to Love and his lady repeatedly, invoking them as addressees.<sup>207</sup>

Each rhetorical question is answered by the poetic voice, who contrasts the despair of his position with an answering determination, painting Love as an unreasonable tyrant. Stanza two's 'Coment porroie avoir bone esperance?' (9, How can I keep up my hopes?) is answered with a firm:

---

<sup>205</sup> Edition cited is *Poèmes d'amour des XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, ed. by Baumgartner and Ferrand; translation my own.

<sup>206</sup> Baumgartner and Ferrand, p. 29.

<sup>207</sup> Lines 1, 5, 10, 18, 26, 42.

Amer m'estuet, ne m'en puis plus sosfrir

Celi cui ja ne vanra a plaisir (13-14)

I must love she who will never be pleased, even if I can't endure it any more.

Having established his resolve in the face of an unfeeling lady, stanza three moves on to Love itself, also depicted as unfeeling – the binomial pair of 'confort ne ahie' reinforces the subject's isolation in the face of a superior force. He asks:

Coment avrai ne confort ne ahie

Encontre Amours vers cui nuns n'a puissance? (17-18)

How will I have any comfort or help against Love, against whom no one has power?

The response is clear: he must resign himself to a greater power, since Love has condemned him to death, condemned him to love 'she who does not love me' (19, 'Amer me fait ce qui ne m'ainme mie'). The repetition of *coment* at the opening of these two stanzas reinforces the sense of frustration and impotence, contrasting neatly with the resolve that answers each rhetorical question. Using the phrase 'ce qui ne m'ainme mie' as a recurring motif (lines 19, 28, 32, 33), the poetic voice cedes ever more control as he repeats the assertion that his lady does not love him at all; however, by stanza five he has turned assertion into rhetorical question, asking:

Ne m'ameroit? Ice ne sai je mie;

Que fins amis doit par bone atendance

Et par soffrir conquerre tel amie. (33-35)



She won't love me? I don't know about that. A courtly lover should by waiting well and by suffering conquer such a lady.

Answering his own question with the rhetorical device of *correctio*, the poetic voice pledges his allegiance to the power of Love.<sup>208</sup> In conforming absolutely to Love's demands, waiting and suffering, he hopes that Love will eventually make his lady succumb. He also quietly cuts his lady out of this process; he has invoked her presence throughout the lyric, speaking of her and (obliquely) to her, but here his answer consigns her to a silent presence who can only be conquered if she conforms to his framework.

Gace's poetic voice uses suggested dialogue to explore love's constraints; the lyric ends with the poetic voice resolved to love his lady, almost as though the internal dialogue is a preparation for addressing her directly. He uses apostrophe to reiterate that he has placed all his love and confidence in her:

Ne vos doit pas trop torner a grevance

Se je vos aing, dame, plus que ma vie (41-42)

You should not be too angry if I love you, lady, more than my life.

The lyric contains dialectic between love's pleasure and pain, and control or lack of it; it also sets up a tension between speech and silence, as the poetic voice asserts several times that he dares not tell his lady of his feelings (lines 21, 29, 39-40). The final stanza ends with the statement:

---

<sup>208</sup> See Hunt, *Chrétien de Troyes: Yvain*, pp. 80-93 for a fuller discussion of the rhetorical devices deployed in *Yvain*, but also across the courtly literature canon.

Mais quant vos voi, n'i a que dou taisir,

Que si sui pris que ne sai que je die. (47-48)

But when I see you, I can only keep silent, as I am so captive that I don't know what to say.

Thus with his penultimate statement the poetic voice encapsulates the tension of speaking of a love he is too smitten to speak about. Gace, a trouvère from Champagne, has taken up the troubadours' conventions and translated them wholesale. He uses the same forms and motifs to create a lyric which deploys internal dialogue to the same ends – to illustrate and explore the concerns and contradictions of the poetic voice who grapples with courtly love.

The next group of lyrics takes this fragmentation of the primary poetic voice one step further. Still knowing, still using primary poetic voices at ease with courtly love and its conventions and nuances, the four lyrics selected for their use of internal dialogue take a different approach to the tension between control and loss of control. With the breakdown of the poetic voice into more clearly-delineated dialogue – which I term internal dialogue – the polarity between control and loss of it becomes more marked. The interaction and dialogue between the primary and secondary poetic voices gives these lyrics a sense of fragmentation but also, in some cases, a real sense of the knowing playfulness and delight in dialogue and dialectic seen in the *tensos* and *jeux-partis*.

The four lyrics are Peire Rogier's 'No sai don chant, e chantars plagra.m fort' and 'Tan tai mon cor e joy assis'; Raimbaut d'Aurenga's 'Braiz, chans, quilz, critz'; and

Gaucelm Faidit's 'd'un dotç bell plaser'. These lyrics are composed by troubadours who, as Kay argues, have all used this type of dialogue within *cansos*. Kay goes on to state that 'the anonymity of the participants in these dialogues, and the extreme irregularity of their exchanges, have given rise to considerable disagreement as to what voices are represented and even over where their contributions begin and end'.<sup>209</sup> The fluidity and complexity of many of these lyrics leads Kay to speak of reading them 'not as *examples* of dialogue but as *representations* of it'.<sup>210</sup> Following Kay, I will focus on how these lyrics use dialectic between two opposing points of view, a 'play of conflicting interpretations'.<sup>211</sup>

Peire Rogier's lyrics, 'No sai don chant, e chantars plagra.m fort' and 'Tant ai mon cor e joy assis' discuss the link between love and language.<sup>212</sup> The scholarly consensus is that each features two poetic voices.<sup>213</sup> 'No sai don chant', which echoes Guilhem IX's 'Farai un vers de droit nien', swings between philosophising on dying for love and the practicalities of success in love with one particular lady, with the binomial pair of 'no cug ni cre' emphasising his pessimism:

Mas tot quant es s'aclina vas la mort

...Fas ton talan, mas ieu no cug ni cre

Tan quan vivras n'ayas nulh jauzimen (8, 31-32)

But all things move toward death...Do as you wish, but I don't think or believe that you'll get any joy as long as you live.

---

<sup>209</sup> Kay, *Subjectivity*, p. 69.

<sup>210</sup> Kay, *Subjectivity*, p. 70.

<sup>211</sup> Kay, *Subjectivity*, p. 71.

<sup>212</sup> Edition cited is Nicholson, ed., *The Poems of the Troubadour Peire Rogier*, translation my own.

<sup>213</sup> Nicholson, p. 23, supports two poetic voices; Kay favours three voices for 'No sai don chant'; see *Subjectivity*, pp. 81-83.

The first two stanzas alternate between a primary and secondary voice with relative clarity; however, stanzas three to six contain rapid-fire dialogue on topics which include whether to sing (stanza three); whether joy is attainable (stanza four); whether success in love is likely (stanza five); and finally, which poetic voice speaks the truth (stanza six). Each poetic voice occupies one end of the spectrum suggested by the topic at hand – topics which alter from stanza to stanza, reinforcing the confusion of the internal dialogue which has emerged as if from a vacuum. From an opening assertion that the primary voice ‘does not know what to sing about’ (1, ‘No sai don chant’), the breakdown of this voice into two (or more), which debate a list of topics, certainly supports Kay’s argument that these dialogue lyrics are ‘an unnamed space where opinions from unnamed sources are tested against each other, hesitations voiced and decisions formed’.<sup>214</sup> By stanza seven, the poetic voices have coalesced into a single voice, with the focus on love:

E per s’amor ai tot mon cor jauzen

e.m part d’enuég, e.m platz quan puec servir (46-47)

And the whole of my heart rejoices for love, and distances me from troubles, and it pleases me when I can serve it.

This lyric, like ‘Tant ai mon cor en joy assis’, gives the impression that the poetic voices are debating for the pleasure of it. The range of topics covered and the abstract opening stanza support this tone of philosophical debate (with, perhaps, a hint of sophistry) which does not necessarily relate to a specific situation, but which clearly suggests a primary poetic voice using dialogue to define a poetic self via a

---

<sup>214</sup> Kay, *Subjectivity*, p. 71.

process of opposition. As Spence suggests, 'what the twelfth-century vernacular text makes possible, then, is the creation of a self that is defined through a complex process of identity and difference'.<sup>215</sup> The layering of voices is a fragmentation of the primary poetic voice which represents exactly this notion of sameness yet difference. In this lyric, the loss of control resolves in stanza seven, allowing the primary voice to gather up the competing voices into one clear pledge of love service. 'Tant ai mon cor' also begins with two stanzas which follow a relatively coherent line of thought; the primary voice sets out his position on love which includes the conventional courtly dialectic, and, as in 'No sai don chant', the poetic voice here presents a pessimistic view of courtly love, using polysyndeton in 'Abaiss'e sordey'e dechai' to make his point:

Qu'assatz vey que tot l'als qu'om fay  
 Abaiss'e sordey'e dechai,  
 Mas so qu'amors e joys soste. (5-7)

I see that everything that men do is lowering, abasing and bad, but I know that love and joy sustains.

By stanza three, the primary voice is asking for an intervention ('demantatz cum! Qu'ie.us diray', 20, Ask how! And I shall tell you). The secondary voice obediently enters into a dialogue:

Membra.m aras d'un mot qu'ieu dis. –  
 E qual? – No vuelh qu'om lo.m deman. (36-37)

---

<sup>215</sup> Spence, *Texts and the Self*, p. 17.

I remember something I said – What was that? – I don't want anyone to ask me about it.

The primary voice's refusal to continue the dialogue leads to its collapse:

No.us er digz ni sabretz quals es. –

No m'en qal, qu'atressi.m vivray. (39-40)

I won't tell you and you won't know what it is – I don't care, I shall live without it.

As Nicholson points out, Peire Rogier's use of dialogue not only gives these lyrics liveliness, but also 'may be seen as conveying, in dramatic form, the struggle of the various conflicting emotions between which the poetic voice allows himself to waver, a struggle which ultimately serves only to emphasise the speaking voice's strength of mind'.<sup>216</sup> The use of dialogue within a monologue frame permits the subject position to fragment, allowing a loss of control, before the primary voice knits the two voices into a final position. This lyric's knowing deployment of dialogue allows humour and a sly dig at the conventions of courtly debate poetry, with the form pushing the voices into polarized positions, making their eventual resolution all the more striking.

There is little obvious humour in 'Braiz, chans, quilz, critz' by Raimbaut d'Aurenga and 'd'un dotç bell plaser' by Gaucelm Faidit. Both link singing to happiness in love – or vice versa. Each has a conventional opening; this moves into internal dialogue which reflects the dialectic of the opening courtly contradictions. 'Braiz, chans' focuses on the pain of love, with the poetic voices dissecting the line between life

---

<sup>216</sup> Nicholson, p. 21.

and death – an exercise in control, as they analyse and manage what should be a moment of extreme emotion.<sup>217</sup> ‘D’un dotç bell plaser’ also uses language as a precision tool, with syntax and rhyme reflecting and reinforcing emotion.<sup>218</sup> This is a poetic voice, like that in ‘Braiz, chans’, which divides, allowing each voice to embody one side of the pain / pleasure dialectic, before the primary poetic voice unites the opposing views – it is an exercise in managed loss of control.

‘Braiz, chans, quilz, critz’ has a spring opening; despite the chatter of birds, the poetic voice doesn’t listen or care (‘mas no los enten ni deinh’, 3, but I do not listen of pay attention to them). This tension is echoed in stanza two, where he announces that his lady disdains him, and ignores his singing – just as he ignores that of the birds:

Si.m fos grazitz

Mos chantars, ni ben acullitz

Per cella que m’a en desdeing (7-9)

If my singing were appreciated or well received by that lady who holds me in disdain.

As the lyric progresses, the opening line’s ‘itz’ rhyme which seemed to bode so well (‘Braiz, chans, quilz, critz’, 1, calls, songs, twitterings and cries) descends into relentless misery:

---

<sup>217</sup> Pattison’s edition and translation cited.

<sup>218</sup> Mouzat’s edition cited; translation my own.

Tristz e marritz (13)

... Jois m'es fugitz! (19)

..."Per qe soi per liei envilitz?" – (26)

... Cum sui trahitz! (31)

... Trop sui arditz! (37)

Sadly and woefully...joy has fled from me...why am I considered so vile by her?...how betrayed I am!...I am too bold!

The primary voice finally asks why he does not kill himself (22, 'Com no-m esteing'). This rhetorical question is taken up by the secondary voice, which in this lyric is attributed to his heart:

Mos cors me ditz

"Per qe soi per liei envilitz?" (25-26)

My heart tells me, 'Why am I so debased by her?' [*translation modified*]

The misery of this lyric, and the division of the voices into a primary voice and one representing the lover's heart, gives a sense of mirroring, or of two voices who take up different positions but who know intimately each other's concerns and thoughts. The primary voice responds to the question above by saying that his lady knows of his devotion only to her; it then asserts that 'I shall die, for I, maddened by love, seek nothing else' (29-30, 'Morrai, car mos cors enfollitz / mas ges non quer'). This split between the two voices is a means of setting out the problem, only to have each voice agree with the other. The lover's misery is confirmed by his head and heart, with the primary voice regretting the way he has bared his heart – quite literally – through internal dialogue. The abject end to the lyric, begging for mercy



(‘Dompna,.I vostre sers fals-faillitz / Merce vos quer’, 50-51, Lady...your false, guilty serf begs mercy of you), confirms the depths to which each voice has fallen.

This lyric’s triangle (lady, primary voice, and secondary voice / heart) plays out in different phases through the poem. The opening contrast between sadness and happiness, singing and silence moves to suggested and internal dialogue, with the primary and secondary voices resolving the issues between themselves. This consensus ends when the primary voice turns his attentions to his lady, addressing her directly to apologise for his lapse. Allowing his poetic self to split in two, revealing the inner workings of his confused psyche and heart, is not the unified front which the primary voice hopes to present to his love object (and perhaps his peers). The anxiety displayed toward the end of the lyric as the primary voice fights to regain control is revealing.

Likewise, ‘D’un dotç bell plaser’ has a primary voice which opens the lyric in one vein and moves rapidly toward a different tone when internal dialogue creeps in, with the primary voice fighting to retain control. The lyric opens conventionally. As Raimbaut d’Aurenga did with his sharp *-itz* rhymes, Gaucelm Faidit uses his rhyme sounds to create a specific ambience. Ending in *-en*, this gentle rhyme in a bisyllabic line creates an atmosphere of calm and pleasure:

D’un dotç bell plaser

Plasen

Movon miei cant ver (1-3)

From a sweet and good pleasing pleasure come my sincere songs.

The accumulation of positive adjectives gives the primary voice a sense of certainty, but also, for the wary audience, a concern that such an excess of happiness may come to an abrupt end. By stanza three, the primary voice's joyous exposition of his happiness has halted. An anonymous secondary voice - probably a figment of the poet's psyche rather than a personification – intervenes. They discuss the wisdom of speaking about the lady's favours, with the secondary voice concerned that the lover has articulated what should be secret:

- Soi donc fols, s'ieu dic m'onor?
- Oc, se-l ditç torn'a folor (50-51)

Am I then mad, if I say that she honours me? – Yes, if speaking becomes folly.

By stanza four, the secondary voice is telling the primary voice to stop speaking :

- Patç!
- Sofren, clau las dentç (58-59)

Peace! Have patience, shut your mouth.

While the primary voice does not heed this advice, and continues to sing of his love, by stanza five the impact of piecing his subjectivity back together, and the concerns raised within the internal dialogue, are marked by a shift in tone. Unlike the easy pleasure of the opening stanzas, stanza five is marked by new vocabulary. The poetic voice is fearful, chained, in pain, martyred and fearful ('temer; temen; onratç / latç; dolor; martire; paor', 69; 70; 74 / 75; 82; 83; 84). The final stanza sees a resolution: despite the extremes of fear and happiness, the poetic voices both agree to send the song to the lady (' – E no-t tire / chanso!', 98-99, Don't tarry, song!). In

this stanza the secondary voice advises the primary one to have confidence and banish negative thoughts (90-93), another pointer to a more knowing approach to courtly love. The primary voice, while uncertain about whether his lady reciprocates his feelings, is able to navigate the protocols of courtly love with the help of his secondary voice, which is a reflection of his own voice and thoughts, to boost his confidence rather than help him to understand his own emotions.

In contrast with the dialogue within monologue seen in narrative texts, these lyrics do not feature poetic voices unfamiliar with love, or operating in a world in which others are aware of the true situation while they struggle with a small proportion of the facts. The division of the subject into two poetic voices as fragments of one psyche operates as a means of negotiating a particular part of the courtly process, aiding a primary voice familiar with its conventions. Far from presenting themselves as *ingénus*, in need of the guidance of a strong external character as in the narrative texts - where maids and queens can have a decisive role in events - these lyrics use suggested and internal dialogue as a means of pausing and calibrating the courtly love process: what we see in these lyrics is what Kendrick describes as 'the tension of deliberate oppositions and contradictions' at work in the *canço*.<sup>219</sup> In the case of those texts which use internal dialogue, the humour and playfulness of the debate form comes across, as well as its ability to tease out the extremes of a debate via dialectic, using 'oppositions and contradictions' to move toward resolution. The group of troubadours who favoured internal debate in *cansos* all follow a similar structure within each *canço* – early coherence, then internal dialogue which articulates opposing positions, followed by a 'final harmony'.<sup>220</sup> This

---

<sup>219</sup> Kendrick, p. 48.

<sup>220</sup> See Kay, *Subjectivity*, p. 77.

formal arc gives the lyrics a coherence which the disjunction of internal dialogue might not at first suggest. The creation of two poetic voices which can be read as two halves of one poetic subjectivity creates a unique situation which balances between control and loss of it, sometimes moving from one to the other within a stanza, lyric, or between two poetic voices.

The next section moves from lyric to narrative. I will consider how monologues within narrative – in Old French and in Occitan – deploy dialogue, whether suggested or internal. In common with the lyrics, these monologues have love as their subject matter, and contain both masculine and feminine voices. This overlap allows comparison of the genres; I will seek to show that the narrative monologues which feature dialogue, whilst part of a common courtly literary tradition, are distinguishable from the masculine voiced lyrics above thanks to the way they approach knowledge of love. The narratives, I will argue, use dialogue within monologue to explore poetic subjectivity which suffers from too little knowledge of love rather than too much.

## **Section Two: Narratives**

The monologues selected are united by subject matter and form: all have elements of dialogue, and all treat the theme of courtly love. They come from the Old French narratives *Narcisus et Dané* and *La Chasteleine de Vergy*; the Arthurian romances *Erec et Énide*, *Lancelot ou le chevalier de la charrette*, and *Cligès*; and the Occitan romance *Flamenca*. I shall first consider the three romances by Chrétien de Troyes (written in the late eleventh century), followed by the *Lai de l'ombre* and *La Chasteleine de Vergy* (written circa 1200), and finally *Flamenca* (written in the late

thirteenth century). All are palpably influenced by lyric, and their use of internal dialogue is perhaps an index of this.

Within the genre, the way in which the monologues use dialogue can be broken down into two categories. The first includes characters who appear genuinely at sea. These characters are hit by love (or Love) and are presented as having very little awareness either of what this emotion is, or of how they should proceed once they have successfully identified it. Their lack of knowledge is often exploited by the narrator, who is able to use the gap between what the character knows and what the external audience knows to comic effect. Characters who fall into this category are Soredamors (in *Cligès*); Énide (in *Erec et Énide*); the Chasteleine de Vergy; and, arguably, Dané in *Narcissus et Dané*.

The second category features a very different type of character. This type not only recognizes love, but has the *savoir-faire* to use the courtly process, with its conventions of language and protocol, to win his or her love object, or at least advance one step further through the maze of courtly love. They include Guinevere (in *Lancelot*); Alexandre (in *Cligès*); Narcissus (in *Narcissus et Dané*) and Guilhem (in *Flamenca*).

Chrétien's three romances are thematically linked. Each tells the story of a knight searching for identity in an Arthurian world. Their encounters with love prompt monologues – by the heroes and by their ladies – as the characters navigate various courtly dilemmas. These monologues use the same formal devices as the lyrics (the apostrophe, the rhetorical question, and internal dialogue); the characters discuss their plight, with the principal distinction between the two genres being the

level of knowledge or *savoir-faire* of the respective characters. Narrative characters use dialogue forms to help them make sense of events; they are often presented as at the mercy of love, and, crucially, as protagonists in a process about which they are not expert. Bruckner has suggested that the monologues on love in Chrétien's verse narratives are more complex than the expressions of love in their prose counterparts, which use different formal devices to illustrate their emotions, and give 'clear and simple expression to the force of their passion'.<sup>221</sup> This is borne out by the way these monologues twist and turn through ignorance and bafflement: this is very different from the *cansos*, whose poetic voices demonstrate a knowledge of love and of their own emotions only occasionally seen in the voices of the narrative monologues. The closed, circular world of the courtly lyric enables its poetic voices to specialize in one thing – courtly love – whereas the competing forces of love and chivalry can leave narrative characters attempting to reconcile different areas and levels of knowledge in an often confusing world.

The use of suggested dialogue to navigate the unexpected is a device which runs through *Erec et Énide*.<sup>222</sup> This romance is unusual in that Erec and Énide are married early on; they encounter difficulties after Énide lets slip that people are talking about Erec's post-wedding *recreantise*. Seeking adventures to prove his prowess, Erec forbids his wife from talking to him. A series of mishaps show that Énide is the wiser of the two, warning her husband of danger and behaving sensibly while Erec struggles to regain a sense of identity. I shall consider the monologue in which Énide laments her fate, and considers Erec's wounds. This comes toward the end of their adventures, when Énide is at a loss as to what to do, or how the

---

<sup>221</sup> Bruckner, 'Redefining the Center', p.98.

<sup>222</sup> Edition cited is *Erec et Enide*, ed. by Fritz; translation my own.

future will unfold. It uses rhetorical questions which allow Énide to work through her problems, and its subject matter combines the general problem of dysfunctional love with the immediate problem of a husband who appears mortally wounded.

The passage opens with the narrator describing Erec passing out from his wounds, seemingly close to death:

La sele et les estriers vuida,

Et chiet pasmez con s'il fust morz. (4600-01)

He slackened his grip on the saddle and stirrups, and fell to the ground unconscious, as if he were dead.

Placed in this situation by a narrator who implies that Erec may not be dead, Énide muddles through with an imperfect grasp of the facts, just as Guinevere does (see below). She combines humour and pathos: her reaction is one of extreme grief (she is described by the narrator as 'pulling at her hair and scratching her face', 4610-11). The extent of her emotions, and her reliance on a knight to protect her in a world which has already shown itself to be extremely dangerous for an attractive young woman, lends the monologue a real sense of sadness.<sup>223</sup> Énide really does need Erec to protect her from an unpleasant fate. However, there are elements of humour, emerging from the gap between Énide's limited knowledge and that of the narrator and external audience. For these latter groups Erec is not the courtly, moral man Énide sees, but a petty and foolhardy knight who has put his responsible, loving wife repeatedly in harm's way, unwilling or unable to learn from

---

<sup>223</sup> Gravdal notes that Erec uses Énide 'as a kind of lightening rod: an invitation to crime. Predictably, Enide's beauty draws bandits, robbers, and the unwanted attentions of two counts, who make "romantic overtures" to Enide'. *Ravishing Maidens*, p. 55.

his actions. Énide's reaction, so appropriate in one sense, also pokes gentle fun at the situation, exposing the gap between reality and perception.

Énide's opening remarks are:

« Dex, que ferai? fait ele. Sire,  
Por qoi me laissez vos tant vivre?  
Morz, car m'oci tot a delivre! » (4612-14)

'God, what shall I do?' she said. 'Sire, why have you left me to live for so long? Death, kill me soon and without hesitation!'

Énide's reaction is instant: she asks God and Death direct questions about what she should do, and supplies her own answer – she should die. Énide knows exactly why:

« He! Dist ele, dolente Enide,  
De mon seignor sui homicide.  
Par ma parole l'ai ocis » (4617-19)

'Ha!' she said, 'miserable Énide. I am my husband's murderer. I killed him with my words'.

Énide, as Guinevere will, sets out a clear chain of events which link her own words and actions to the eventual death of her knight. This chain leads inevitably to her death, as just punishment for the death Énide believes she caused. This belief leads Énide to use Erec's sword in a suicide attempt, and it is this real feeling which



keeps this monologue on the side of pathos rather than humour. Énide addresses Death directly, asking her to take her as soon as possible:

«Dex! Que ferai? Por qoi vif tant?

...Mout m'a la Morz en grant despit,

Quant ele ocire ne me daigne. (4649, 4652-53)

'God! What shall I do? Why stay alive?...Death holds me in great disdain, when she doesn't deign to kill me'.

Énide's determination to die means that she answers her rhetorical question with the point that Death obviously does not wish to respond to her pleas, so she resolves to use Erec's sword rather than wait for Death's mercy (4660-61). Suggested dialogue, here, has Énide answering her own rhetorical question; Death is invoked but remains silent. Since Death has ignored her, Énide will not rely on prayer, and will take matters into her own hands:

Ja n'en serai mes en dangier,

N'en proiere ne en sohait. (4662-63)

I will no longer be put in danger, or reliant on prayer and wishes.

Énide answers her own question in a resolutely practical manner. In future, she will act; she will not rely on words. Despite the unexpected events and extreme emotions she encounters, Énide's means of deciphering these is a rational process of question and answer which moves her from ignorance to resolution.

*Lancelot* is probably the most famous Arthurian romance.<sup>224</sup> It tells of the love affair between the eponymous hero and Guinevere, King Arthur's queen. This adulterous relationship is not straightforward. The couple endure a series of often comic ups and downs, including Guinevere's lament for Lancelot's supposed death – like Énide, she navigates a situation in which she knows only part of the story. In this monologue (lines 4197-4244), the character regrets her earlier hauteur toward Lancelot, lamenting his loss and her stupidity in rejecting him. Blaming herself for his demise, she debates whether life or death would be better; she dissects the situation using suggested dialogue, via a series of rhetorical questions which she answers.

The passage opens with two examples of suggested dialogue:

...De coi me sovint  
Quant mes amis devant moi vint  
Que je nel deignai conjoïr  
Ne ne le vos onques oïr!  
Quant mon esgart et ma parole  
Li veai, ne fis je que fole? (4197-4202)

What was I thinking of when my friend came before me, and I didn't even deign to greet him or even listen to him! When I forbid him to see me or talk to me, didn't I act like a madwoman?

Responding to this, Guinevere asserts that far from being *fole*, a term associated with madness in love, she describes her actions as worse than this: 'que felenesse

---

<sup>224</sup> Edition cited *Lancelot ou le chevalier de la charrette*, ed. by Aubailly; translation my own.

et que cruex' (4204, what felony and cruelty). Throughout this monologue, the author maintains several levels of knowledge. Guinevere (and Lancelot) are not in full possession of the facts, with Lancelot unaware of Guinevere's concern, and Guinevere lamenting a lover who is still alive. Meanwhile, the narrator and the external audience are aware of the facts. This gap between reality and perception lends Guinevere's comments dramatic irony and a humorous undertone.<sup>225</sup> Guinevere insists that it was her refusal to welcome Lancelot which killed him, sure that her courtly lover has reacted badly to her *froideur*. As Lefay-Toury puts it, 'Guenièvre...prête à l'amour, et donc à elle-même, une puissance et une importance démesurées. C'est en cela, peut-être, qu'elle n'est pas exempte d'un certain ridicule'.<sup>226</sup> Guinevere is explicit on this point:

Cil dui cop l'ont mort, ce me sanble (4218)

These are the two blows which killed him, it seems to me.

Suggested dialogue emerges as Guinevere asks whether she will ever be sufficiently punished for this crime (4220-21). She supplies her own answer, that sufficient punishment isn't possible (4222, 'Nenil voir'). The dialogue moves from madness, to cruelty, to mortal blows, and finally to the prospect of no punishment being great enough. Guinevere's rhetoric becomes ever more extreme, and the hyperbole gives the external audience a moment of humour. This continues as Guinevere considers whether her own death would be an appropriate consequence, asking if living would be acceptable if she suffers:

---

<sup>225</sup> Green's discussion of dramatic irony states that 'for its effects this type of irony depends on the superior knowledge of the audience, aware of a truth that the character cannot envisage'. 'Irony and Medieval Romance', p. 57.

<sup>226</sup> Lefay-Toury, *La tentation du suicide dans le roman français du XIIe siècle*, p. 115.

Quant je a rien ne me deport

S'es max non que je trai por lui? (4234-35)

If I enjoy nothing so much as the torment I endure for him?

Conveniently, Guinevere answers this in the affirmative, sliding away from the prospect of an immediate compensatory death ('Mes certes, il m'est mout pleisant / Que j'en aille lonc duel feisant', 4241-42, But certainly, it's very enjoyable for me if I feel pain for a long time). As Gaunt argues, Guinevere answers her own question – should she die – with a "no" embellished with gratuitous hyperbole'.<sup>227</sup>

Guinevere dwells on this response to the question of life versus death, reinforcing the humour with the earnestness of its repetition:

Mialz voel vivre et sofrir les cos

Que morir et estre an repos (4243-44)

I prefer to live and suffer the consequences than to die and be at peace.

The layers of knowledge and humour are emphasized by the narrator's comments, who mentions that when Lancelot hears of the queen's reaction to the news of his death, he is so upset that he contemplates suicide (4255-58). Both Guinevere and Lancelot are so upset that they think very hard about dying, before deciding against it.

---

<sup>227</sup> Gaunt, *Love and Death*, p. 121.

Guinevere uses rhetorical questions and suggested dialogue to navigate an unexpected situation; crucially, while she has an incomplete knowledge of the facts, she does have an abundance of *savoir-faire*. She is, as Gaunt suggests ('Guenevere talks herself out of suicide'), using rhetoric and her knowledge of the courtly system to move toward an end-point favourable to her, demonstrating her grief without actually having to die.<sup>228</sup> The humour comes from the sense that while they talk incessantly about the possibility of dying, neither Guinevere nor Lancelot come anywhere near death.

Unlike the very real threat to Énide, Guinevere uses emotional rhetoric, with which she is familiar, to move away from any threat to the status quo. The lovers in *Cligès*, however, genuinely embody extreme emotion.<sup>229</sup> Soredamors and Alexandre's monologues form a discrete pair; taking the monologues together allows examination of how two differently gendered voices approach an identical problem: whether or not they are in love. *Cligès* divides into two clear sections. The first section is about the love between Alexandre and Soredamors, while the second section addresses the love between Fenice and the eponymous Cligès; the romance features several monologues on love. The author and narrator's exploitation of irony within the monologues has been discussed in detail by scholars such as Haidu, who has identified structural irony throughout the work.<sup>230</sup> Irony is clearly identifiable within these two monologues; I suggest that the difference in levels of knowledge between the external audience and the characters also

---

<sup>228</sup> Gaunt, *Love and Death*, p.119.

<sup>229</sup> Edition cited *Cligès*, ed. by Méla and Collet; translation my own.

<sup>230</sup> Haidu, p.9, asserts that 'the study of stylistic irony led to the discovery that irony was the basic method of composition used in *Cligès*'.

underlines the gulf in control between those who comprehend their situation and those who do not.

I shall first consider the monologue in which Soredamors asks how she has fallen in love. The key formal element here is the rhetorical question. This device is used throughout the 49 line speech, giving it a clear sense of dialogue:

Grieve? Non fait, einçois me siet. (479)

Don n'ai ge mes eulz en baillie? (481)

Amerai le je s'il ne m'aime? (493)

Dirai ge por ce que je l'aim? (496)

Wound me? No, they rather please me.

Haven't I got my eyes in my power?

Do I love him if he does not love me?

Should I tell him that I love him?

This monologue implicates the audience in the dialogue via its consistent use of questions, some of which are resolved by Soredamors herself, but some of which are left to the audience. The monologue opens after Soredamors and Alexandre's journey by boat with Arthur and Guinevere. Soredamors has not deigned to love, and *Amors* is about to take his revenge on her pride ('Et molt se cuide bien venchier', 457, And he thinks he will avenge himself well). Setting the scene, the narrator describes how Soredamors appears ill, or seasick ('Sovent palist, et si tressue', 462, Often she turns pale, and sweats). The description of a lover as ill (Guinevere attributes Soredamors' appearance to seasickness, 560-63) references

Ovid's *topos* of love as a sickness.<sup>231</sup> The marine setting, and Chrétien's play on the homonyms *la mer*, *amer*, *amers* (the sea, to love, bitter) in the section after Soredamors' monologue echoes the same trope in the romance of *Tristan*.<sup>232</sup>

Soredamors takes up the metaphor of love as an arrow which enters through the eyes: she accuses them of betraying her ('Or me grieve ce que je voi', 478, Now what I see wounds me). From the outset Soredamors' thoughts follow a dialectical pattern, with each assertion or previously reliable body part undermined or inverted. Her eyes, formerly loyal to her, bring her pain; her assertion that they wound her is immediately followed by rhetorical questions undermining this:

Or me grieve ce que je voi.

Grieve? Non fait, einçois me siet.

...Don n'ai ge mes eulz en baillie? 478-79; 481

Now what I see wounds me. Wounds me? No, rather it pleases me...So don't I have power over my eyes?

Soredamors' fight against love is that of a character caught in a situation she does not fully understand. Her logic zig-zags toward what is for the audience an inevitable conclusion.<sup>233</sup> The questions continue: since Alexandre does not woo her, he cannot love her; and if he does not love her, should she love him? (490-93).

---

<sup>231</sup> Chrétien's familiarity with Ovid is undoubted; Guyer has highlighted this monologue's similarity to that of Pomona in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Ovid's use of love as a sickness ('The Influence of Ovid on Crestien de Troyes', pp. 96-97 and pp. 121-24).

<sup>232</sup> Polak, *Chrétien de Troyes: Cligès*, p. 38; Freeman, *The Poetics of Translatio Studii* and *Conjointure*, p. 15; and Kelly, 'Narrative Poetics: Rhetoric, Orality and Performance', p. 53.

<sup>233</sup> As Tasker Grimbert points out, 'Chrétien's romances, besides being highly entertaining, are provocative, designed to engage his listeners / readers in a process of reflection that often parallels that of the hero'. 'Cligès and the Chansons: A Slave to Love', p. 129.

This rhetorical question is answered by more: if her eyes obey his beauty's call, does she then love him? (496); what crime have her eyes committed if they look at him? (501-2); should she blame them? (504). The list of rhetorical questions creates an implicit dialogue with the audience – implicated in Soredamors' conversation – and with herself. She supplies the answers, leading her further toward the focus of the debate, her heart:

Chose qui me feïst dolente

Ne deüst pas mes cuers vouloir,

Sa volentez me fait douloir. (508-10)

My heart should not want something which hurts me, its wishes hurt me.

The *voloir* / *douloir* rhyme pair encapsulates the antithesis at the heart of courtly love, as does the repetition of *fole* (511, 512, 515), which picks up on the themes at the start of the monologue, of love as an illness and love as an uncontrollable external force. Soredamors ends with one final rhetorical question ('Cuide m'Amors mestre a la voie / Qui les autres siaut desvoier?', 518-19, Does Love think he can guide me, he who pushes others off course?), which she answers quite firmly ('Car je ne sui de rien a lui / Ja n'i serai, n'onques n'i fui', 521-22, I am not, have not been, nor will ever be, anything to him). The humour of such a declaration at the end of a monologue entirely devoted to her love for Alexandre is underlined by the immediate comment of the narrator ('Vers Amors se cuide desfendre / Mes ne li a mestier desfense', 528-29, She thinks to defend herself against Love, but there is no defence against him).



The monologue plays on conventional courtly themes (love as sickness, love entering through one's eyes and travelling to one's heart, love at sea, love bringing joy and pain). They are elaborated via dialectic, rhetorical questions and the rhyming couplet. In contrast with the *cansos* (where the narrator is able to use dialogue to boost his confidence or explore a situation about which he is more knowing), this monologue uses form to highlight lack of knowledge. Soredamors gropes toward a conclusion inevitable for the audience but far from being so to her; she uses dialectic to explore her options and does so in a context which contains several other voices – including the narrator and Alexandre, her putative lover. She knows less than the external audience, and the back and forth between opposing positions gives a sense of self-persuasion, of the overwhelming force of Love, unlike the control seen in the lyrics. Soredamors attempts to use an intellectual process to navigate an emotional conundrum; Alexandre, as Haidu points out, relies rather on 'images and metaphors'.<sup>234</sup>

Alexandre opens with the concern that he is *fol* (mad, 626, 627, 630, 632), just as Soredamors did. Starting from the position that he has been overwhelmed by a force which has made him take leave of his senses, his first rhetorical question asks whether it would be better to conceal his true feelings, lest others recognise the madness which consumes him:

Dont ne me vient il meuz celer

Que fol me feïsse apeler? (631-32)

So wouldn't it be better for me to dissemble, than to be called mad?

---

<sup>234</sup> Haidu, p. 73.

His answer is clear ('Si celerai ce dont me dueil', 634, so I shall hide that which hurts me). However, the link between madness and love as a sickness is quickly made. Using *traductio*, where one word is inflected in more than one form ('mecine / mecinez'), Alexandre states that his illness is so serious that it is incurable, that no cure or herb will help him – the seriousness with which he sets out his concerns undermined by the rhetorical form:

A chascun mal n'a pas mecine,  
Li miens est si enracinez  
Qu'il ne puet estre mecinez (646-48)

Every illness has a cure, but mine is so deeply-rooted that it cannot be helped.

Having come to a firm conclusion, he promptly takes up the opposite point of view, arguing that he knows exactly who the correct doctor is ('Poïsse je parler a mire / Qui del tout me poïst aidier', 652-53, I could speak to a doctor, who could easily help me). Soredamors also describes her physical symptoms, but only Alexandre concludes that Love is the interlocutor he needs:

Car molt ai mal, et si ne sai  
Quex maux ce est qui me joustise. (658-59)

Because I am really ill, and I don't know what this trouble is which worries me.

Again, Alexandre considers each side of the problem, following his denial of knowledge with the statement that, in fact, he does know where this pain comes from:

Ne sai? Si faz, jel cuit savoir,

Ce mal me fet Amors avoir. (661-62)

Don't I know? Yes, I know it well – Love has given me this pain.

The antithesis between acknowledging and denying the problem continues in Alexandre's approach to love; Love is causing him pain but should be the origin of sweetness and guidance (663-64), and Love, which he had seen as the source of all goodness, has treated him cruelly (665-67). This tension between pleasure and pain, the perception that love should be a pleasant experience, preoccupies Alexandre. Having accepted that he is in love, his complaints to Love move the monologue toward internal dialogue. Continuing the theme of love as an illness, as a wound which the lover suffers, the anonymous interlocutor asks why Alexandre still complains:

- Ja n'i pert il ne cop ne plaie,

Et si te pleinz? Donc as tu tort. (696-97)

No cut or wound appears, and yet you complain? You are in the wrong.

The exchange concentrates on how love has caught Alexandre, and this concern echoes that of Soredamors, who also asks which part of her body has betrayed her. Alexandre feels that Love's arrow has pierced his heart (689), and when asked how it did so when no wound is visible on the outside, replies:

- Par l'ueil. (694)

Through my eye.

He continues that its entry through his eye didn't do him any harm, and that it was only when the arrow reached his heart that he felt its pain:

- En l'ueil ne m'a il riens grevé,  
Mes el cuer me grieve forment. (686-87)

In my eye it didn't hurt me at all, but in my heart it hurts me deeply.

Again, *transductio* ('grevé / grieve') emphasises the severity of his condition, and in seeking to explain the path of love via his eye to its place in his heart, in response to his interlocutor's questioning, Alexandre describes the eyes as the 'mirror of the heart' (708, 'Mes c'est li miroers au cuer'), with love passing through this mirror toward a heart which is aflame, just as a candle burns within a lantern (712-14).<sup>235</sup> This extended metaphor continues for 25 lines, and this section ends with Alexandre, like Soredamors, criticizing his body for betraying him:

Je cuidoie avoir trois amis,  
Mon cuer et mes .II. euz ensemble,  
Mais il me heent, ce me semble. (750-52)

I thought I had three friends, my heart and my two eyes together, but they hate me, it seems to me.

Labelling his heart and eyes his enemies, he calls them bad servants who have obeyed themselves, not their master (756-62). Moving on to the arrow itself,

---

<sup>235</sup> Polak (*Cligès*, p. 18) notes that the metaphor of love entering the heart through the eyes, featured in the monologues of Lavinia, Soredamors and Alexandre in *Cligès*, is a neoplatonic motif shared by Chrétien's narratives and the troubadours; see also Cline's 'Heart and Eyes', pp. 264-89.

Alexandre describes its appearance in detail, and takes up another trope deployed by Soredamors – the *mer / amer* rhyme (the sea / to love). Combining metaphor with a physical reminder of his lady, the feathers on the arrow are made of Soredamors' golden hair (786), reminding him of falling in love (788-89). By this stage, having gone through denial and acceptance, Alexandre continues to a conventional description of the lady he now acknowledges he loves, including her face, eyes, mouth, neck, all of which are without equal.

Alexandre bows to the inevitable. He has gone through a process remarkably similar to that experienced by Soredamors, and in which the relationship between the character and his external audience is the same (ie the character is less aware of the true situation than its external audience). He ends the monologue by stating:

Or face Amors de moi son boen  
Si come il doit fere dou suen,  
Car je le vueil et si me plest. (861-63)

Now let Love do what he will with me, as he should do with those who are his, because I want this and it pleases me.

Finally, Alexandre welcomes his 'illness' - perhaps not quite the 'passive victim' Polak describes, but certainly a willing victim - hoping that the cure for it will come from Love, or from Soredamors (864-68).<sup>236</sup> In a monologue which echoes that of Soredamors, Alexandre uses the same tropes and goes through the same thought process. However, his ability to recognize and adapt to his new situation is more apparent than that of Soredamors, who resists the emotion overwhelming her.

---

<sup>236</sup> Polak, *Cligès*, p. 42.

Alexandre recognises the situation, uses dialectic to explore it, and quickly resolves the dilemma into a clear direction, giving himself an element of power within the trap of love. This decisiveness also affects knowledge; starting from a position of ignorance, he ends in a position closer to *savoir-faire* than ignorance. This position celebrates his subjection to Love rather than refusing to acknowledge it or trying to fight it – very different from Soredamors. These two monologues are an interesting take on the way that Chrétien uses formal devices to suspend his poetic voices on the line between knowledge and ignorance, and their concomitant positions, control or lack of it. This is a subtle game, and one which, I suggest, is gendered – Alexandre plays a more aggressive hand, placing him in a position of power where he welcomes, even enjoys his ‘submission’ to Love.

A gendered approach to courtly love is also evident in the next text. The story of Narcissus and Echo features in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and also appears in Old French texts including *Cristal et Clarie*, the *Roman de la Rose*, and *Narcisus et Dané* (also known as *Le Lai de Narcisse*). *Narcisus* is an anonymous, twelfth-century narrative which features Dané, a courtly lady, in place of Echo.<sup>237</sup> It contains several monologues by Narcisus and Dané, but I will focus on those which address their reactions to love. These monologues, from a masculine and a feminine voice respectively, allow comparison with the way in which Soredamors and Alexandre use suggested dialogue to navigate their emotions in the *Roman d’Enéas*.

The *Narcisus* recounts the prophecy that if Narcissus sees himself he will die. When he is fifteen, and the most handsome man nature could have created, the

---

<sup>237</sup> Eley dates this text between 1160 and 1165; see *Narcisus et Dané*, p.11.

king's daughter Dané sees him ride past her tower. Immediately falling in love with him, she resolves to accost him when he is hunting and persuade him to return her feelings. However, Narcissus' only interest is hunting, not love, and he rejects her. Her prayers that he might also experience unrequited love are answered: Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection later that day – a reflection he thinks belongs to a woman. By the time he realises that this reflection is just that, it is too late, and he and Dané die in each others' arms, Narcissus unable to speak.

While Dané is not constrained to repeat only the last few syllables of those to whom she speaks, she is nonetheless an Echo figure, a voice engaged in frustrated dialogue, reliant on 'a source beyond her'.<sup>238</sup> Dané uses a combination of suggested and internal dialogue to articulate her feelings for Narcissus. Like Echo, she is an imperfect double for Narcissus, allowing them to follow parallel paths – they are 'deux fables en une'.<sup>239</sup> From the moment she sees him she is taken by their similarity, saying:

Assés somes d'une maniere,

D'une biauté et d'un eage; (342-43)

We are very similar in background, beauty, and age.<sup>240</sup>

This inability to form an independent subjectivity can be seen in her monologues, which use suggested and internal dialogue to form a character whose subjectivity quickly starts to fragment. Narcissus, too, seeks a love object whose attraction lies

<sup>238</sup> Griffin, 'Echo, Voice and Citation in *Le Lai de Narcisse* and *Cristal et Clarie*', p. 65.

<sup>239</sup> Berger, 'Dernières nouvelles d'Écho', p. 74.

<sup>240</sup> Edition and translation cited is *Narcissus et Dané*, ed. by Penny Eley.

in its similarity to himself – both characters demonstrate a need for completion highlighted by the suggested and internal dialogue in their monologues.

Dané is in many ways a typical narrative heroine, literally floored by the force of Love; the narrator tells us that Dané experiences the physical symptoms which applied to Soredamors:

Or sent froidure, or i a caut,  
Toute fremist, tranble et tresaut (173-74)

Now she feels cold, now hot, she shivers all over, trembles and quivers.

Her monologue opens with a rhetorical question, indicating some confusion about which emotion she feels:

Qu'es ce que j'ai? Por quoi tresail?  
Or resent je trop dur mon lit (188-89)

What is wrong with me? Why do I quiver? I think my bed is too hard.

Answering her own question, she asks another, using impeccable but disingenuous logic:

Queus merveille est ce que je veil?  
De ce prendra je boin conseil:  
Je ferai ces femmes lever,  
Ma coute estuet a retorner. (195-98)



Is it any wonder that I'm awake? I will get this sorted out: I will wake up the maids, as my mattress needs to be turned over.

Once the bed has been remade, Dané asks why, since she should now be comfortable, she remains unhappy:

'Lasse! fait ele, 'que puet estre?  
Je ne gis pas bien sor senestre;  
Or sui sor destre, que me caut?  
Ce ne me nuist ne ne me vaut.  
Ne puis trover engien ni art  
Que j'aie bien de nule part. (221-26)

'Unhappy me!', she said, 'what can it be? I am not comfortable lying on my left, or on my right – what troubles me? It is neither worse nor better for me. I can't find a skill or a trick which will improve things in any way'.

She is forced to conclude that thoughts of Narcissus are troubling her, a leap from effect to cause:

K'ai ge a faire de cel vassal?  
C'est la riens qui plus me fait mal,  
Quant me membre de sa biauté. (235-37)

What has this man got to do with me? It's a little thing which does me most harm, when I remember his beauty.

This rhetorical question provides an interesting answer – Dané’s love for Narcissus is, unusually, framed purely in terms of his appearance. This is not a knight whose exploits or moral code impress her, this is a love based on looks, a situation which is more frequently expressed when the love object is a woman. A series of quick-fire rhetorical questions follow, as Dané asks herself what relevance his character has, and why she continues to speak, before continuing to praise his appearance and resolving not to wait for her father’s decision on a husband. At this point, the monologue moves from suggested to internal dialogue, with Dané acknowledging that her words are coming from a second source. She marks this change by asking:

Dont te vient or ceste parole?

Orains fus sage, or es fole!

Veus tu par toi tel conseil prendre?

Dont ne te vient il mius atendre? (261-64)

But where do these words come from? You used to be wise, now you are mad! Do you want to take your own advice? Wouldn’t it be better for you to wait?

As the monologue moves toward internal dialogue, the second voice addresses Dané as ‘you’, the shift to the second person singular a marker for the change. The question and answer continues, ‘a crisis of self-questioning and reappraisal’,<sup>241</sup> with Dané addressed by name:

---

<sup>241</sup> Kay, ‘Love in a Mirror’, p. 272.

Qu'es ce, Dané? Dont n'as tu honte?

Ses tu donques ke plaisir monte?

Plaist toi cil plus? Oïl, par foi,

Mais je n'en sai prendre conroi (269-72)

What is it, Dané? Aren't you ashamed of it? Do you know that pleasure grows?  
Does this one please you more? Yes, by my faith, but I don't know how to go about  
it.

The monologue ends with Dané lamenting her encounter with Love, stating that she needs advice. As Burgess points out, 'conseil' is a running theme, and here dialogue underlines the fact that despite the intervention of a second voice Dané is still unable to decide what to do.<sup>242</sup> This puts her reaction to Love firmly in the camp of inexperience:

Onques mais ne soi qu'Amors fu,

Or a primes l'ai conneü:

Or me fait il sans froit tranbler;

Ne sai de moi conseil doner. (333-36)

I never knew what Love was, but now for the first time I have known him: now he makes me tremble, although it's not cold; I don't know what advice to take.

Dané is unable to speak satisfactorily to Narcissus, and monologue should provide comfort, but in fact what we see here is dialogue which seems to hasten her slide to a fractured subjectivity. Every question and answer moves her onto shakier ground, emphasising the slipperiness of language. Nouvet, writing about Ovid's

---

<sup>242</sup> Burgess, 'Narcisse: conte ovidien français du XIIe siècle', p. 595.

tale of Narcissus, comments on language, saying that ‘this original diffraction of language into alternative meanings unsettles not only the notion of a reliable first meaning, but also the notion of a speaking consciousness’.<sup>243</sup> This is certainly borne out here, albeit in an altered version of the myth, and is continued in the monologue in which Narcissus addresses his own image. Dané both desires and resists unity with Narcissus, aware that in wanting him she is transgressing, and it is this balance between selves which the elements of dialogue bring out. As Gilbert puts it, it is only a ‘declared desire no longer to be Narcissus [which] constitutes the subject as truly Narcissan’.<sup>244</sup>

Just as for Dané, Narcissus is hit by love the moment he sees the object of his affections, and uses apostrophe and rhetorical questions to create suggested dialogue:

Vien ça! Que trais tu ariere?

Por qu’es orgelleuse vers moi?

Ne sui gaires mains biaux de toi. (686-88)

Come here! Why do you retreat? Why are you disdainful toward me? I am hardly less beautiful than you.

Again, just as with Dané, there is immediate recognition that this image reflects or completes him. There is added emotion for Narcissus, since of course his image echoes every move he makes, giving poignancy to the distress of his questions and answers:

---

<sup>243</sup> Nouvet, ‘An Impossible Response: The Disaster of Narcissus’, pp. 107-8.

<sup>244</sup> Gilbert, ‘“I am not he”: Narcissus and Ironic Performativity in Medieval French Literature’, p. 952.

E, las! por quoi ne l'oi parler?  
Que ne se vient ça fors mostrer?  
U ce li vient de grant orgueil,  
U el ne vuet çou que je voeil,  
Car quant je ri, je li voi rire,  
Quant je sospir, ele souspire (705-10)

Alas, why don't I hear her speak? Why doesn't she come out and show herself?  
Either it comes from great pride, or she does not want what I want, since when I  
laugh, I see her laugh, when I sigh, she sighs.

Like Dané, Narcissus' suggested dialogue signals incompleteness and confusion, and this inability to understand why he is not united with an image who mirrors him so well leads him to articulate his frustration with Love. Like Alexandre, Narcissus reaches the obvious conclusion – that his emotional and physical symptoms (he feels cold, even when it isn't) are due to love.<sup>245</sup> As in Dané's monologue, toward the end the suggested dialogue moves into internal dialogue, signalled by a second voice addressing Narcissus in the second person singular:

Or es tu ja d'Amor mout sages!  
Qui t'an a tant dit? Tes corages? (767-68)

Now you are very wise about Love! Who told you so much about him? Your heart?

The answer to this question is immediate:

---

<sup>245</sup> Lines 725-28.

Amors est mastre qui me duist,  
Qui dedens le cors m'art et cuist:  
Il m'aprent tote sa nature  
Et si m'angousce sans mesure. (771-74)

Love is the master who teaches me, who burns within my body and sets me on fire:  
he teaches me everything about his nature, and torments me beyond measure.

Narcissus ends the monologue addressing his image:

A! douce riens qui si m'esprends,  
Se tu savoies queus tormens  
Et queus painnes jou ai por toi,  
Tu venroies parler a moi. (775-78)

Ah! Sweet nothing who captures me, if you knew what torment and what pain I have  
for you, you would come and speak to me.

Narcissus cannot cross the boundary separating himself from his image, so uses suggested dialogue to establish a link between him and his love object, just as in the troubadours' lyrics. As Agamben argues, Narcissus encompasses each end of the courtly spectrum, creating the perfect circular love affair in which he can never have the image he sees, but also shattering this cycle through death.<sup>246</sup>

---

<sup>246</sup> Agamben describes Narcissus as 'the exemplary paradigm of the *fin'amors* and, at the same time, with a polarity that characterizes the psychological wisdom of the Middle Ages, of the *fol amour* that shatters the phantasmatic circle in the attempt to appropriate the image as if it were a real creature'. *Stanzas*, p. 83.

These two monologues present contrasting views of love, with Dané slower to recognise it. The characters are united by lack: they speak to unresponsive images of themselves, giving piquancy to the concept of monologue as dialogue. The monologues highlight the unreliability of language, and of signs – each falls in love with an image, interpreting it wrongly; Goldin underlines Narcissus' inability to 'distinguish between false separateness and true'.<sup>247</sup> Both characters need dialogic form to navigate this impasse, and without knowing it, Narcissus echoes Dané's emotions and reactions, as each realises the impossibility of love with their own image.<sup>248</sup> Unlike the Narcissus seen in the thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*, whose tale is used to reinforce masculine subjectivity, these monologues allow each gendered character to struggle with their own position in relation to Love.<sup>249</sup>

*La Chasteleine de Vergy* takes the gap between the knowledge of the characters and of the text's external audience, seen in *Narcissus and Dané* and the three Chrétien romances as a subtle force which the narrator exploits on occasion, and pushes it to the forefront of the textual experience. The impact of the monologue in *La Chasteleine de Vergy* hinges on the gap between the knowledge of the poetic voice and its various audiences. The Chasteleine speaks about love, and has an external and an internal audience in the form of the young girl who overhears her.

This text, considered in the light of its reliance on secrecy in Chapter Two, is the tale of a lady whose love affair with a knight goes awry when his duchess also falls for him. This monologue is the Chasteleine's lament for the loss of her love,

---

<sup>247</sup> Goldin, *The Mirror of Narcissus*, p. 27.

<sup>248</sup> Spivak discusses Echo's association with death and the impossibility of being in greater detail in 'Echo', pp. 24-27.

<sup>249</sup> See Kay, *The Romance of the Rose*, p. 45.

prompted by the duchess's barbed comment which lets the Chasteleine know that the secret affair is no longer secret.

The passage can be read as part of a dialogue between the duchess and the Chasteleine, since it responds to the duchess' observation:

- Non, je croi bien », dit la duchesse,  
« mes vous estes boinne metresse,  
Qui avez apris le mestier  
Du petit chainnet afetier. » (720-23)

'No, I do believe you', said the duchess, 'but you are a good mistress who has learned the way to train a lap dog'.

This triggers the Chasteleine's monologue, which opens with a rhetorical question, asking what the duchess' remark means:

Et dit: «Ha! Sire Diex, merci!  
Que puet ce estre que j'ai oï (738-39)

And said, 'Ha! Lord God, have pity! What can it be that I have heard?'

Her first response is to attribute the duchess' knowledge to information which can only come from her knight. The monologue turns on the discrepancy between the knowledge of the Chasteleine and the duchess, the Chasteleine using logic to resolve her dilemma – the knight has told the duchess. This erroneous answer is compounded by her conclusion that the knight must have done so because he loves the duchess and no longer loves the Chasteleine:



Ce ne seüst ele par nului,  
Ce sai je bien, fors par celui

Que je amoie, et traïe m'a (742-44)

She can't have known that from anyone, I know very well, except from him who I loved, and who has betrayed me.

From the outset the Chasteleine's position is clear. She is convinced that her knight's words have betrayed her. Responding in kind, she uses speech to set out her stall. She does so, she thinks, in private, just as she infers her knight did when confiding in the duchess. However, the narrator has made it clear that she is in fact overheard by 'une puceleite' (732, a young girl) concealed at the foot of the bed. Thus the monologue, far from being the private affair the Chasteleine envisages, has a completely different framework. Within the text, the *puceleite* listens, as does the external audience, which uses the back and forth of suggested dialogue to tease out and decipher the implications of the duchess' cryptic comment. The Chasteleine uses apostrophe to invoke the presence of the knight, asking him:

Ha! Amis, dont est ce venuz?

Que povez estre devenuz,

Qui vers moi avez esté faus? (760-62)

Ha! Friend, what has happened? What have you become, that you have been false to me?

This direct address creates yet another audience, with the knight's silent spirit conjured up by a Chasteleine determined to arrive at the 'truth' of the matter. Her

answer to this rhetorical question is that there is nothing she has done to prompt disloyalty. Listing her own qualities, in a way reminiscent of the defence of the indignant *trobairitz*, the Chasteleine argues that she is not at fault:

Onques avant ne puis ne primes,  
En penser, en dit, ne en fet,  
Ne fis ne pou ne grant meiffet,  
Pour coi me dussiez traïr (769-72)

Never before, after, or at all, in thought, word, or deed, did I do anything wrong, either trifling or serious, for which you could betray me.

Her commitment to their love affair was total, and the rhetorical device of polysyndeton (frequent connective particles) hammers home the strength of her feelings. She infers that the knight's commitment did not match hers; and she asks *fine amors*, yet another addressee, whether it is fair that she is betrayed when she has kept her part of the agreement:

Ha! fine amors, est il dont droiz  
Qu'il li a ainsi decouvert  
Nostre conseil, dont il me pert? (813-15)

Ha! Pure love, so is it fair that he has thus revealed our agreement, and so loses me?

The answer is quickly reached – she must die. She is clear that her knight has 'delivered her to death' (829, 'm'a traïe et livree a mort') and the monologue ends with her death. For an external audience who know more than she does, this death

and the flawed logic which led to it is all the more poignant thanks to the next lines, which point out that the knight is completely unaware of the consequences of his actions and is ‘enjoying himself’ (‘mes ses amis ce ne set mie / qui se deduisoit en la sale’, 843-44, but her friend knows nothing of this, and is enjoying himself in the hall).

The Chasteleine’s reasoning is flawed due to ignorance, with tragic consequences – she thinks she has the *savoir-faire* to navigate the world of the court and of courtly love, but genuine emotion leads to tragic results. If one can discern a thread of *savoir-faire* running through narratives such as the *Chasteleine de Vergy*, then by the composition of *Flamenca*, a later text (c. 1275), the thread has been pushed firmly to the fore. This incomplete Occitan narrative can be seen as part of a broader development of courtly literature, in which parody and humour are central to the action. Using the volume of courtly literature which has preceded it, the text plays on conventions; its hero and heroine use courtly love to license their behaviour. Within this scenario, dialogue becomes a different proposition, with characters using it as a tool which enables them to reach their desired goal. *Savoir-faire* is crucial: know-how, or ease with courtly love conventions, allows the characters to explore their options via dialogue whilst always bearing in mind where they wish to end up.

*Flamenca*’s take on dialogue and debate provides an interesting comparison with the earlier lyric and narrative texts considered above.<sup>250</sup> The monologue I consider sees the text’s hero, Guilhem, ask *Amors* why he has not been more successful in

---

<sup>250</sup> See Huchet’s reference to *Flamenca*’s debt to the lyric tradition, ‘*Jaufré et Flamenca: Novas ou Romans?*’, p. 281.

love. The monologue combines two approaches – the more knowing take on love epitomized by the lyrics, and the tension between control and lack of it of the narratives, approaches also seen in Flamenca’s contribution to dialogue which I will look at in Chapter Four. Guilhem, a cross between *clergie* and *chevalerie*, and religious and secular values, is also the cross between knowledge and ignorance.<sup>251</sup> He recognizes exactly what his situation is, but is unable to control it without the help of *Amors*.<sup>252</sup>

Guilhem uses apostrophe to invoke Love, and rhetorical questions to explore his emotions:

E dis «Amors, que faitz? On ses?

Que dirai eu car no.m venes

Esseinar so que deurai dire? (3845-47)

And he says, ‘Love, what are you doing? Where are you? What will I say if you don’t teach me what I should say?’.

The answer is that Love is, according to Guilhem, deaf or sleeping (3849). Putting words into Love’s mouth, Guilhem asks if Love would echo God’s words to his apostles, advising them not to concern themselves with what they will say before they begin to speak:

---

<sup>251</sup> See Shedd, ‘“Flamenca”: A Medieval Satire on Courtly Love’, p. 51.

<sup>252</sup> Edition cited *Flamenca*, ed. by Huchet; translations my own.

E dis lur: "Baron, quan venres  
Davan los reis, ja non penses  
Que.us digas que be.us avenra  
Aqui eis so c'obs vos sera?" (3855-58)

And you say to them, 'Barons, when you come before kings, don't think about what you will say, since what will come to you at that moment?'

Guilhem is quoting God, putting the words into Love's mouth, and using the rhetorical question to further his own argument – that Love leaves him unable to court Flamenca. Guilhem's answer to his own question dismisses the thought that the apostles might feel anything like the fear which he does before his lady, with a self-aggrandisement which lends humour to the image:

Anc apostols tan gran paor  
Non ac davan emperador  
Con eu ai ancui de faillir  
Davan cella cui tan desir (3859-62)

Never did an apostle feel such great fear before an emperor as I do of failing before she who I desire so.

Throughout this dialogue, Guilhem combines the religious and the secular to comic effect, with, as Sankovitch points out, the 'parallelism between games and love...often very pronounced'.<sup>253</sup> Guilhem's final words to Love seem to reject his help, implying that Guilhem prefers to act independently:

---

<sup>253</sup> Sankovitch, 'The Romance of Flamenca', p. 16.

Mas ren non sai qu'ieu deja dir,

Et on plus fort eu m'o albir

On meins atrop mot que li faza. (3871-73)

But I don't know at all what I should say, and the more I think about the less I find the right words.

For Guilhem love depends on communication. Language is the way to Flamenca's heart; he links language and love in a neat rhyme (*entendre / encendre*, 3869-70, to understand / to inflame). Dialogue with Love centres on *savoir-faire*; Guilhem is certainly able to navigate through love, and understands his current situation and the outcome he desires, but needs Love's intervention to assist him. This need to explore the contradiction of love and his own powerlessness is presented with a sense of irony and humour throughout.<sup>254</sup> It is, perhaps, this knowing distance, this sense of comedy, which differentiates the suggested dialogue in *Flamenca* from the lyrics and to a certain extent from the other narratives discussed. Distance and knowing irony become a primary characteristic of the characters; courtly love is depicted as a bundle of contradictions: 'brilliant, engaging and hypocritical...the poet's view is that it must be accepted on these terms'.<sup>255</sup> The evolution of *Flamenca's* plot – Archambault becomes a stereotypical *jaloux*, Flamenca and Guilhem become lovers, Flamenca and Archambault are reconciled and Guilhem returns to the world of chivalry – is, as Fleischman points out, a debate about 'whether the form of love that best conforms to human passions and emotions is also most consistent with the social demands and expectations of courtly life. Our

---

<sup>254</sup> See Damon's 'Courtesy and Comedy in "Le Roman de Flamenca"', which describes 'the full range of ironic incongruity between the sacred format and the profane intention of Gullaume's enterprise, and usually does it quite overtly', pp. 609-10.

<sup>255</sup> Topsfield, 'Intention and Ideas in "Flamenca"', p. 130.

poet in effect sets individual desire and social convention at diametrical poles in what will emerge as the central conflict of a narrative constructed expressly as a vehicle through which to juggle these opposing forces into a workable synthesis'.<sup>256</sup> Guilhem uses dialectic in a monologue which balances the tension between different worlds and value systems, placing him at their centre as he uses suggested dialogue within monologue to help him to his goal.

The final section will consider lyrics by the *trobairitz* (female troubadours). Five lyrics by the Comtessa de Dia, Castelloza, and Lombarda all use aspects of dialogue. However, they do so in a distinct fashion. They use an atmosphere of dialogue, using a back and forth of assertion and qualification which has the rhythm of dialogue, without reaching the clear-cut dialogue of the masculine-voiced lyrics or the narrative monologues.

### Section Three: *Trobairitz* Lyrics

The feminine voice approaches dialogue very differently from her male counterpart, occupying a position which gives her a sense of control. Starting from a position of frustrated communication, she shapes a subjectivity far from the fractured, scattered voices seen in the lyrics examined above. Not only do feminine voices favour the debate form, but they create a very different *modus operandi*, and do so in two ways.<sup>257</sup> First, they use dialogue as a constant theme and formal device, analyzing and reliving past encounters with the lover, and doing so, formally, via

---

<sup>256</sup> Fleischman, 'Dialectic Structures in *Flamenca*', p. 224.

<sup>257</sup> As Bec has set out, 'les pièces féminines se divisent en trois grands groupes: 1) les onze *cansos*...2) dix *tensos* classiques ; 3) deux pièces (*tensos*) atypiques...Soit, un nombre approximativement égal de *cansos* et de *tensos*'. '« *Trobairitz* » et chansons de femme', p. 283.

contradiction rather than suggested or internal dialogue. These contradictions are communicated via assertion and qualification rather than the rhetorical question and its resolution. Secondly, the framework from which they articulate their feelings is different from that of the troubadour lyric or the narratives. Instead of the absence of an encounter with the beloved, which prompts a response which by definition will be reflexive and inward-looking, the trigger for speech in these lyrics is an unsuccessful encounter, a failed attempt at communication. The poetic voice speaks because she has not been heard, giving her a tone of frustration. Instead of a poetic voice which principally speaks to itself or its peers, the feminine voices are emphatically, sometimes aggressively, aimed at their *amics*, in an attempt to make their lover hear and understand them: what they want is dialogue.

My corpus consists of three lyrics by Castelloza ('la de chantar non degra aver talan', PC 109.2; 'Amics, s'ie.us trobes avinen', PC 109.1; and 'Mout avetz faich lonc estatge', PC 109.3); Lombarda and Bernart Arnaut d'Armagnac's 'Lombards volgr'eu eser per Na Lonbarda' (PC 54.1 = 288.1), and 'Estat ai en greu cossirier' (PC 46.4) by the Comtessa de Dia.<sup>258</sup>

Castelloza epitomises the lady forced to speak when she would rather remain silent.<sup>259</sup> 'la de chantar non degra aver talan' opens with the poetic voice stating:

---

<sup>258</sup> The Trobairitz were writing at roughly the same time as the troubadours considered above, and were probably members of the aristocracy. See, for example, *The Voice of the Trobairitz*, ed. by Paden, p. 14, which states that 'The chronology of the trobairitz phenomenon is not easily grasped... One may, however, generalise that the trobairitz seem to have been active from around 1170 to around 1260'; and Shahar, *The Fourth Estate*, p. 166 and Jeanroy, *La Poésie lyrique des troubadours* I, pp. 314-15, who suggest that the trobairitz must have been members of the aristocracy. Edition and translation cited is Bruckner et al, eds., *Songs of the Women Troubadours*.

<sup>259</sup> See Van Vleck's 'Tost me trobaretz fenida', p. 95.



Car on mais chan

E pieitz me vai d'amor (2-3)

Because the more I sing the worse it goes for me in love.

Addressing her lover, the speaking voice runs through a series of unanswered assertions, referring to him repeatedly as *amics*.<sup>260</sup> This warm term has shades of irony when combined with the desperation of the lyric, with each stanza adding another layer to what very quickly becomes a series of contradictions. Stanza two addresses her lover directly, as well as invoking 'all lovers' as her witness:

Ai! Bels amics, sivals un bel semblan

Mi faitz enan

Q'ieu muoira de dolor,

Qe l'amador

Vos tenon per salvatge (10-14)

Ah! Fair friend, show at least one gracious look to me before I die of grief; all lovers consider you a beast.

Reinforcing her address with the personal pronoun *vos* (14), just as we saw in 'Donna, cel qe.us es bos amics', the poetic voice answers this allegation herself ('car ioia no.m ave / de vos', 15-16, for no joy comes to me from you), using a back and forth of assertion and qualification which replaces any masculine response. Stanza three's allegation is that:

---

<sup>260</sup> Lines 10, 30, 34, 43.

Mas ia vas vos non aurai cor truan

Ni plen d'engan,

Si tot vos n'ai peior (19-21)

My heart will never betray you, nor seek to trick you, though I have the worst from you.

As before, the use of *vos* and the interpellation of her *amics* emphasizes the thwarted dialogue. Despite his poor treatment of her, the subject concludes that he deserves a lady of higher worth ('e sai ben qe.us cove / dompna d'aussor paratge', 26-27, I know well that you deserve a lady of higher lineage than mine). This theme of inadequacy also emerges in stanza five, in which she admits that she stole his glove:

Q'aic vostra gan

Q'enbliei ab gran temor (38-39)

That I had your glove, the one I stole in fear and trembling.

This confession is qualified by the response that she has no claim over the glove, so returned it ('q'eu non ai poderatge', 45, I have no rightful claim).

Finally, the poetic voice makes it clear in stanza four that her *amics'* behaviour brings her no joy:

Que ia.m viretz lo fre,

Amics, non fassatz re.

Car iois no mi soste

A pauc de dol non ratge (33-36)

And as for turning in my direction, friend, you do no such thing! Because no joy sustains me, I'm all but mad with grief.

The poetic voice echoes aspects of the dialogue of the troubadour lyrics; she invokes her *amics* through direct address reinforced with personal pronouns, and uses suggested dialogue via consistent suggestion and qualification. However, despite these echoes, these feminine voices react to the troubadour lyrics, which create a narcissistic, circular poetic voice, and to the narrative approach, which can certainly be described as isolated, by constructing a very different poetic subjectivity.

This feminine voice becomes both lady and lover, empowered and powerless subject. She speaks out because the courtly relationship has gone wrong: that her address goes unanswered makes her repeated use of personal pronouns more poignant. As Ferrante points out, the feminine voice's use of direct address is one striking difference between masculine and feminine-voiced *cansos*.<sup>261</sup> As Siskin and Storme have identified, there is an element of compulsion, since the more she sings, the worse it goes for her in love.<sup>262</sup>

---

<sup>261</sup> Ferrante, 'Notes Toward the Study of a Female Rhetoric in the Trobairitz', pp. 64-65.

<sup>262</sup> Siskin and Storme, 'Suffering Love: The Reversed Order in the Poetry of Na Castelloza', pp. 114-16.

The tension between good and bad behaviour runs through the lyric – the speaking voice embodies conventional courtly qualities ('bona fe', 17, faithfully; 'non aurai cor truan', 19, My heart will never betray [you]), and the closing *tornadas* contrast her lover's inconstancy with her own fidelity in a final contradiction:

Car cel qui pretz mante

A vas mi cor volatge (57-58)

For he who upholds merit has an inconstant heart towards me.

Car viu en bona fe,

Bontatz e ferm coratge. (61-62)

For I dwell where there's good faith, good will and constant heart.

'Amics, s'ie.us trobes avinen' continues the theme of unrequited love. A sense of disjunction from the world can be seen across Castelloza's lyrics, even if one disagrees with Paden et al's assertion that 'the songs of Na Castelloza concentrate on feelings of melancholy and affliction with a single-mindedness which borders on masochism'.<sup>263</sup> In 'la de chantar', the poetic voice was uncertain about the wisdom of speech; now, she states that articulating her emotions is positive. However, while there is a sense that speaking can be cathartic, each lyric has a backdrop of unease. There is a tone of disjunction, a sense that a feminine voice speaking will not please her *amics*. Despite the fact that in theory this is a masculine fantasy fulfilled, the feminine voice's assumption is that her speech is unwelcome, that she speaks because previous communication has in some way failed.

---

<sup>263</sup> Paden et al, 'The Poems of the *Trobairitz* Na Castelloza', p. 165.

'Amics, s'ie.us trobes avinen' states that:

Q'ieu vuoill proar enans qe.m lais morir

Qe.l preiar ai un gran revenimen

Qan prec cellui don ai greu pessamen (22-24)

I'd like to prove, before I let death come, that in pleading I feel well renewed, when I court the one who gives me heavy pain.

This *traductio* ('prejar / prec') underlines the opposing emotions she draws from an identical action, placing her in the middle of an irresolvable tension. Continuing the direct address to her lover – again addressed as *amics* – the speaking voice explores the parameters of her position within the courtly system. Working from a position of moral superiority, she accuses her lover of being 'mal e fellon e tric' (4, evil, harsh and false). As in 'la de chantar', this assertion is qualified by a contradiction: she remains faithful to him, although she resolves to do so only because to do anything less would negate her position of authority and allow him to criticize her:

Non farai ia, car no vuoil puscatz dir

Q'ieu anc vas vos agues cor de faillir (13-14)

But no, not that! I don't want to enable you to say that my heart was ever false to you.

We see here the implicit response to a question or direction from her *amics* contained in 'Non farai ia' – another nod to a dialogue which only Castelloza can

hear. The extra-textual audience is privy to only one side of this dialogue, since we are unable to hear her *amics*'s response.

Stanza one contrasts his bad behaviour with her wish to praise him; she asks what she would do if he had behaved well:

Amics, s'ie.us trobes avinen

Humil e franc e de bona merce (1-2)

Friend, if I had found you kind, humble, frank and merciful.

The answer to this hypothesis is provided – she would love him ('be.us amera', 3, I'd love you well). Contradiction appears when she sets out what happens when he is 'mal e fellon e tric' (4, evil, harsh and false); she wishes to broadcast 'vostre bon pretz' (6, your great worth). Stanzas one and two follow the same pattern: the assertion and response, which frequently use contradiction, include apostrophe, using second person plural verb forms reinforced by personal pronouns. Each stanza divides into gendered positions, alternating between aloofness (lines 1-4; 9-12) and talkativeness (lines 5-8; 13-16).

Stanza three contrasts speech and silence, opening with the admission:

Si be.is dizon tuich que mout descove

Que dompna prei a cavallier de se (18-19)

Though everybody says that it isn't proper for a lady to plead her case with a knight.

However, despite the reference to the incongruity of a feminine voice speaking, by the end of the stanza the poetic voice has resolved the dilemma by declaring that in speaking out she feels renewed (22-24), a contradiction which the lyric form allows her to explore. Stanza four contrasts public opinion with the poetic voice's own emotions:

Assatz es fols qui m'en repren

De vos amar, pois tant gen mi cove (25-26)

He's a great fool who blames me for loving you, because it suits me well.

This is resolved by the assertion that far from agreeing with those who reproach her for loving him, even speaking of him brings her joy (30-32). This optimistic tone continues in the final two stanzas, where the poetic voice's position is clarified. Stanza five combines joy and distress, asserting that she is happy in her loneliness:

E sapchatz ben que mais iois no.m soste

Mas lo vostre que m'alegra e.m reve

On mais en sent d'afan e de destric (34-36)

You can be sure no joy sustains me except yours, which cheers and revives me when most I feel the anguish and distress of it.

The final stanza states that she is not sending this to her lover, but is telling him herself (44, 'E no.us o man q'ieu mezeussa.us o dic'), another attempt to force a dialogue.

‘Amics, s’ie.us trobes avinen’ contains a feminine voice who positively wishes to speak; she sticks closely to a dialogic structure of suggestion and qualification, with each allegation addressed to her *amics* and answered by her. The poetic voice plays with gender roles – as Gravdal argues, she weaves ‘in and out of gendered positions, alternately mimicking the troubadour Domna and the suppliant Amairitz’.<sup>264</sup> Castelloza contrasts her ‘good’ behaviour (the aloof masculinity of the stereotypical *domna*) with her misfortune (where she echoes the hurt, talkative femininity of the stereotypical male lover). The ease with which she invokes the poles of happiness and unhappiness, speech and silence, and good and bad behaviour can be seen in masculine poetic voices, but is foregrounded here. Instead of the circular world of the troubadour and trouvère lyrics, where the poetic voices seem content to continue their one-sided dialogue indefinitely, Castelloza takes a different approach. Echoing the masculine voices, she hints at dialogue but does so through direct address and contradiction.

The topos of a lady ignored by her *amics* despite her many qualities is also the starting point of ‘Mout avetz faich lonc estatge’. This poetic voice’s lover ignores her despite her worth. Using a trope seen in the troubadour lyrics, love captures her heart and leaves her at its mercy (‘mas tant m’a amors sazida’, 18, but love has seized me so). The poetic voice describes emotions with an external source. Love, something uncontrollable, will kill the lady:

Tost mi trobaretz fenida,  
 Car per pauc de malananssa  
 Mor dompna s’om tot no.il lanssa (38-40)

---

<sup>264</sup> Gravdal, ‘Mimicry, Metonymy, and “Women’s Song”’, p. 421.



You will soon find me dead; for a lady all but dies of her sickness if no man treats it.

She uses this joy / death contradiction throughout the lyric; if her *amics* does not give her the *iois* (37, joy) she needs, she'll die. Stanza one opens:

E si d'autra vos perte

Mi avetz morta e trahida (7-8)

And if you're attending to another, you have murdered and betrayed me.

Stanza two elaborates on the same theme, asserting that her *amics* 'fasetz mal per be' (16, return[s] me harm for good). The contradiction is clear: his bad behaviour means she loves him truly, as love has seized her so (17-18, 'be.us am...tant m'a amors sazida'). This lyric also contains a twist: as well as using apostrophe, she invokes her husband, her family, and other ladies in love, interpellating them in a wider dynamic which only underlines the one-to-one focus of the rest of the lyric:

Mout aurai mes mal usatge

A las autras amairitz,

...Tot lo maltraich e.l dampnatge

Que per vos m'es escaritz

Vos grazir fan mos lignatge

E sobre totz mos maritz (21-22; 41-44)

I'll set a very poor example to other loving ladies...For all the damage and the harm that come to me from you my family thanks you, especially my husband.

Vos grazir fan mos lignatge

A sobre totz mos maritz (43-44)

My family thanks you, especially my husband.

Each lyric begins with the same premise – unhappiness in love, despite good faith and behaviour from the lady, and thwarted communication – and combines the back and forth of contradiction with direct address to hint at dialogue. As Dronke argued, Castelloza ‘makes articulate a range of thoughts and imaginings that no man among the troubadours had expressed’.<sup>265</sup> The insistent structure of contradiction pulls the external audience in; this tension between control or lack of it, articulated through speech, is also central to the Comtessa de Dia’s ‘Estat ai en greu cossirier’.

The Comtessa de Dia’s feminine voice has loved a knight who betrayed her when she refused to grant her love to him. Suggested dialogue and contradiction explore her love and distress. The first two stanzas describe her feelings:

E vuoil sia totz temps saubut

Cum eu l’ai amat a sobrier (3-4)

I want it known for all time how exceedingly I loved him.

The oxymoron of private grief and public broadcast continues in stanza two, which contrasts the haughty demeanour of stanza one with total subjection. No longer the lady who didn’t grant her love (‘car eu non li donei m’amor’, 6, because I didn’t grant my love), she is now begging him to use her as his pillow:

---

<sup>265</sup> Dronke, ‘The Provençal *Trobairitz*: Castelloza’, p.144.

Q'el s'en tengra per ereubut

Sol q'a lui fezes cosseillier (11-12)

For he'd be overjoyed were I only serving as his pillow.

The lyric contains a rhythm of assertion and response, within and across stanzas.

The final stanza asks:

Bels amics, avinens e bos,

Cora.us tenrai en mon poder,

E que iagues ab vos un ser,

A qe.us des un bais amoros? (17-20)

Fair, agreeable, good friend, when will I have you in my power, lie beside you for an evening, and kiss you amorously?

This is answered by a condition – he will have to agree to do ‘tot so qu'eu volria’ (24, everything I wished). Contradiction pervades the lyric - the opening lines are those of a lady who has lost control of love, while the final stanza is a quiet reappropriation of power. She establishes tension between a good and bad lover, and by the end of the lyric has inverted the opening positions, ending with her *amics* a suppliant lover, reinstating herself as the distant lady setting the terms of engagement.

Unlike the troubadour and trouvère lyrics, which claim to want a dialogue with the object of their affection but which, on closer inspection, address their remarks principally to their masculine peers, the feminine voices wish to engage with their

*amics* because past relations have been unsatisfactory. They want to construct a dialogue with their beloved, but remain aware that articulating their thoughts is not something the *amics* welcomes.

The ability to take up masculine constructs and reflect them back to a masculine audience is done explicitly in Lombarda's 'Lombards volgr'eu eser per Na Lonbarda'. This exchange of *coblas* uses land acquisition and identity as a metaphor for the business of love, with Lombarda deploying apostrophe and the rhetorical question as the two voices dispute control over land, identity, and love. Bernart's opening bid is as follows:

Lombards volgr'eu eser per Na Lonbarda,

Q'Alamanda no.m platz tan ni Giscarda (1-2)

I'd like to be a Lombard for Lady Lombarda; I'm not so pleased by Alamanda or Giscarda.

Declaring his love for Lombarda, in stanza two he addresses Lord Jordan. This cuts Lombarda out of any response, despite his earlier submission to her; as Sankovitch points out, these stanzas play heavily on names: 'in the *tornada* her name is Mirror', marking a progression from autonomous subject to generic object in the masculine voice's eyes.<sup>266</sup> Bernart divides land up between the two men, creating a man-to-man connection which runs in parallel with that he has begun with Lombarda:

---

<sup>266</sup> Sankovitch, 'Lombarda's Reluctant Mirror', p. 190.

Seigner Iordan, se vos lais Alamagna  
Fransa e Peiteus, Normandia e Bretagna,  
Be me devez laisar senes mesclagna  
Lonbardia, Livorno e Lomagna (9-12)

Lord Jordan, if I leave you Allemagna, France, Poitou, Normandy and Brittany, you should surely leave me, without protest, Lombardy, Livorno and Lomagna.

He ends his offer by saying that if Lord Jordan helps him, he'll assist 'ten times as much' (14, 'eu per un dex') with Lord Jordan's lady. Bernart's *tornada* reverts to addressing his 'Mirail de Pres' (17, Mirror of Worth) – he references the love that binds them, in which she reflects his own worth straight back at him, reducing her to the status of an amplifying, clarifying mirror.<sup>267</sup>

Lombarda's opening stanza echoes that of Bernart, using his rhyme scheme (a a a a b b a b) and his content. She begins by repaying his compliment:

Nom volgr'aver per Bernard Na Bernada  
E per N'Arnaut N'Arnauda apellada (21-22)

I'd like to have the name Bernarda, for Bernard, and for Lord Arnaut be called Arnauda. [*translation modified*]

This mirrors but amends Bernart's rhetorical flourish, echoing his conceit but putting it on a more personal basis, using alliteration and *traductio* to do so, as she does throughout her stanza ('Bernard Na Bernada...N'Arnaut N'Arnauda apellada', 21-

---

<sup>267</sup> See Sankovitch's 'Lombarda's Reluctant Mirror' for discussion of the use of the mirror as metaphor.

22).<sup>268</sup> Having made her point she ends the stanza with a rhetorical question which undermines the superficially courtly tone of Bernart's stanzas. Asking which mirror he gazes into (28, 'e.l mirail on miraz'), she responds to this rhetorical question herself:

Car lo mirailz e no veser descorda

Tan mon acord, c'ab pauc vo.l desacorda

...mas del cor pes

On l'aves mes

(29-30; 33-34)

For mirroring and absence so discord my chords [my memory] that I can barely stay accorded...still, I wonder where you've put your heart. [*translation modified*]

The wordplay which segues into concern about the location of Bernart's heart is the work of a poetic voice at ease in the world of masculine metaphor. There is a sense of frustration as she tries to communicate directly with a masculine voice who appeared to instigate a dialogue. However, by his second stanza this dialogue with a feminine interlocutor has slipped, and he addresses Lord Jordan. Lombarda uses contradiction to explore her options as she attempts to rectify a thwarted encounter with Bernart: is the poetic voice the one who is fractured, *desacorda*, or is the fault Bernart's, who has taken away his heart ('no vei, que lui taises', 36, I don't see [it], you keep it silent)? As Burns argues, Lombarda highlights Bernart's inability to maintain his mirror metaphor: 'if he were truly reflected in her, he would have to stand before her...yet she perceives absence, not reflection'.<sup>269</sup>

---

<sup>268</sup> See Ferrante, 'Notes', p. 68.

<sup>269</sup> Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 75.

These stanzas use contradiction to explore identity; the feminine voice must establish her identity in a masculine world which controls and assigns feminine identity. It's perhaps telling that her second stanza includes a reminder of her own name ('mas can record so q'el meus noms recorda', 31, but when I remember what my own name recalls), an assertion of her identity as an individual, a reminder that he wished to be a Lombard for Lady Lombarda. As Kay suggests, the feminine poetic voice has used 'masculine and feminine gender markers (absence and presence of -a) in a way that might furnish a commentary on the derivational wordplay of verses 1 and 21-22 where both morphological and *real* gender are clearly at stake, as well as commenting on the artificiality and obscurity of the conventions of male lyric poetry'.<sup>270</sup> This play on language and gender places the feminine voice in opposition to Bernart, with contradiction and elements of suggested dialogue the techniques used to achieve tension between control and lack of control, and masculine and feminine.

These poetic voices are self-aware, able to balance the tensions they articulate through contradiction and the back and forth of assertion and qualification, a tension which hints at dialogue. Castelloza's lyrics can be seen as a narrative arc in which a timid voice, determined to speak out about a courtly system which has let her down, becomes a bold articulation of a wronged woman, broadcasting how she has been wronged by her lover and achieving satisfaction from the act of articulation. The split between lover and singer ends with the singer emerging as the more complete persona, who dominates Castelloza's lyrics (an outcome which in itself can be read as echoing the balance explored in troubadour lyrics).<sup>271</sup>

---

<sup>270</sup> Kay, 'Derivation, Derived Rhyme, and the Trobairitz', p. 172.

<sup>271</sup> See the discussion in Van Vleck's *Memory and Re-Creation*, pp. 18-19.

Far from 'neutralising her domination', as Shapiro argues, I suggest that the articulation of their position allows these feminine voices a space where they create a new balance, a new position for themselves within the courtly hierarchy, using the formal devices deployed by masculine voices in the troubadour lyrics, and masculine authors in the narratives.<sup>272</sup> Their very intervention into a (masculine) literary world, particularly when that intervention emerges from a different starting point, is radical. They form part of the evolution of the twelfth-century vernacular text, what Spence identifies as making 'possible, then...the creation of a self that is defined through a complex process of identity and difference'.<sup>273</sup> Using contradiction as their central device, they create a rhythm which suggests dialogue without ever straying decisively into the defined dialogue – suggested and internal – used in the masculine-voiced lyrics and the narratives. The feminine voices seek tangible communication with their *amics*, actively trying to engage them rather than avoiding the encounter. This combination of similarity and difference both unites these lyrics with the masculine-voiced corpus and sets them apart.

## Conclusion

The examples discussed in this chapter cover two genres, but are linked by their use of elements of dialogue. Within the framework of a monologue – opening with a first-person singular poetic voice – all these texts incorporate dialogue. The formal devices which enable this move are the rhetorical question, the apostrophe, contradiction and dialectic, and internal dialogue, where the poetic voice breaks

---

<sup>272</sup> Shapiro, 'The Provençal *Trobairitz*', p. 562.

<sup>273</sup> Spence, *Texts and the Self*, p. 17.



down into multiple voices. This use of dialogue within texts which begin with a subject who is unified, speaking in the first person singular, casts a previously unexplored light on the way the poetic voice is constructed. I suggest that this use of dialogue as a way of exploring and constructing what it means to be a courtly lover has not yet been fully explored – it is possible that dialogue is more central to the formation of poetic subjectivity than previously thought. Dialogue undoubtedly complicates the notion of what constitutes the speaking subject, allowing it the space to tease out the implications of courtly love before reaching a conclusion.

Troubadour and trobairitz lyrics can be differentiated from the monologues contained within narratives by their approach to knowledge, and as a consequence control. The poetic voices seen in the lyrics may well resist their position within the courtly love hierarchy. They use the formal devices I have identified to deconstruct that position, and to articulate their disappointment in it. However, they do so from a starting point different from that of the narrative monologues, with a different level of knowledge. Their resistance to the vagaries of courtly love is possible precisely because they recognize it in the first place; they know what it is that has captured them, and they also know where they should be within its conventions. They discuss what they should do next, or how they came to be in such a predicament – and the feminine voices echo and invert the approach of the masculine voices, carving out their own niche within the courtly tradition. They create a space just as the masculine voices create their place in the courtly canon, by recognizing and finessing conventions. They do so as outsiders, whose gender places them on the edge of a system from which they cannot escape. Their inversion of gender roles places them at the centre of an axis of control or lack of it; singing of failure in love,

they embody a loss of control whilst simultaneously regaining control through the medium of song. If they cannot be loved, they will at least be heard.

This delicate balance moves firmly toward lack of knowledge and control in the narratives. With some exceptions - particularly *Flamenca*, a later composition whose gleeful exploitation of what is or is not 'courtly' lends its monologues a knowing humour and irony, narratives use dialogue within monologue very differently from the lyrics. Narrative monologues use the same formal devices – the rhetorical question, apostrophe, and internal dialogue – but do so within a context which gives each monologue a different tone. These monologues feature poetic voices whose knowledge level is distinct from those of the lyrics. They can be read as dividing into two types: those characters either innocent, unaware of love and the courtly process, or those who have far more *savoir-faire*, and who are able to negotiate the courtly love system with greater ease.

Their starting point is different: in the first category are those assailed by love – and by Love – innocents caught up in a process, and a system, of which they often have limited knowledge. Frequently struggling to establish that what they are feeling is love, they move in a world of shifting parameters, in which the facts either change or appear to change, once the truth emerges. This lack of knowledge – and hence of control – creates a different dynamic between the character and his or her audience, both within and outside the text. Narrative authors recognize this and often exploit it, using irony (both situational and structural) to comic effect. The second group is closer to the lyric voices; they are able to process Love's assault more quickly, and in some cases their air of innocence can be read as exactly that – a veneer which disguises an ability to negotiate the courtly world. The characters'

*savoir-faire* allows them to approach each situation as an opportunity to further their course toward an end goal, using dialogue to navigate toward an end-point they actively desire.

Monologue as dialogue may not form a large proportion of the twelfth and thirteenth-century courtly literature corpus, but it is central to the study of dialogue. Its subtle approach allows consistent interrogation of the courtly process by poetic voices who cover a broad spectrum of subject positions. From the empowered to the ignorant or disenfranchised, dialogue within a monologue framework encompasses distinctive poetic voices, all of whom use debate, and often dialectic, to further their understanding.

## Chapter Four

### Women's Desire

#### Introduction

This chapter considers how feminine voices operate within dialogue and debate: specifically, feminine voices whose participation in dialogue allows them to articulate desire. I shall ask whether dialogue gives the feminine voice a space to resist the binary position imposed on her by the form; and whether she can resist the either / or nature of dialogue and dialectic upon which the courtly system relies.

The courtly canon undoubtedly favours dialogue as a medium for the feminine voice: nearly half the extant corpus of attributed trobairitz and feminine trouvère lyrics involve dialogue.<sup>274</sup> The corpus for this chapter allows me to analyse the influence of dialogue on the construction of gender by looking at a number of sources; it is drawn from Occitan and Old French *tensos* and *jeux-partis*, as well as *pastorelas* and *pastourelles*; Occitan and Old French narratives (*Flamenca*; Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, and Marie de France's *lais Chaitivel* and *L'Aüstic*), and Old French *fabliaux*.

The focus of this chapter is the representation of gender within literature – or, to borrow Bec's terminology, *féminité textuelle* as opposed to *féminité génétique*.<sup>275</sup> Questions of attribution and authorship, undoubtedly important, present too broad a field of enquiry for this chapter, which limits itself to the construction of gender

---

<sup>274</sup> I calculate their proportion as 44% and 48% respectively, based on *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, ed. by Bruckner et al, and *Songs of the Women Trouvères*, ed. by Doss-Quinby et al.

<sup>275</sup> Bec, "'Trobairitz'" et chansons de femme', pp. 235-36.

within the text. As Burns argues, 'it is possible to chart in the exchange between male and female partners in the Occitan *canso*, larger patterns of social interaction...inherited patterns of thought that accompany the troubadour's repertoire of traditional and stylized poetic forms'.<sup>276</sup> The restrictive choice between 'Lady' and 'woman' which Burns identifies in the *cansos* will inform my examination of the feminine voice in dialogue – can she break free of these extremes?

Defining 'femininity' within a text is challenging – identifying 'the elusive question of the female subject' preoccupies feminist scholars still.<sup>277</sup> I take it to mean a culturally assigned position which brings with it clear behavioural expectations and boundaries, which have been created and defined by the author of the text. However, defining and policing these norms can of course be done by both male and female writers. This process can lead to extreme cultural positions, which only allow movement between pre-established poles: positions such as madonna, whore, virgin, or *domna* spring to mind in the courtly context. Felman asks 'how can one speak from the place of the Other? How can the woman be thought about outside of the Masculine / Feminine framework, *other* than as opposed to man, without being subordinated to a primordial masculine model?'.<sup>278</sup> Following Felman, I ask that question in the context of dialogue – is resistance to the binary form imposed by dialectic and dialogue possible? Can a feminine voice, constrained by a polarising dialogue form, suggest a model of femininity which moves away from the either / or imposed on her by the structure of the text?

---

<sup>276</sup> Burns, 'The Man Behind the Lady in Troubadour Lyric', p. 255.

<sup>277</sup> Burns and others discuss the difficulty of 'tracking a course between, on the one side, naïve historicism and essentialism that would reify either "women" or "woman" and, on the other, a masculine psychocriticism that erases historical women from the picture altogether'. 'Feminism and the Discipline of Old French Studies', p. 230.

<sup>278</sup> Felman, 'Women and Madness', p. 4.

I shall ask whether feminine voices take up these culturally assigned binary positions, or whether they resist them; and, if they do resist them, how this is articulated. The articulation of literary femininity or resistance to it is tricky, since the dialogue form is of course binary, and the pressure exerted on the poetic voices by the form cannot be underestimated. I shall therefore ask to what extent the articulation of femininity is altered by form – in other words, whether the polarising nature of debate and dialogue pushes feminine voices to take up gendered positions more extreme, or different from, those they would choose in a non-binary form, despite the fact that gender is not necessarily a strictly binary construct. Whilst scholars such as Bruckner are correct to describe a woman speaking out as signifying ‘an act of power, a self-empowerment that announces their entry into language...whether in oral or written exchanges’, I hope to examine this entry into language in the context of a discourse which is irrevocably shaped by masculine voices and narrators, and consider how a feminine voice can shape her own rhetoric within these constraints.<sup>279</sup>

Finally, given the cultural freight attached to the positioning of feminine voices within literature, I shall ask whether it is possible to distinguish between a feminine voice forced to take up a culturally assigned position, and a feminine voice choosing to occupy that position because it reflects her feelings. These are of course huge questions, but they can usefully be applied to the feminine voices which favour the debate form in twelfth- and thirteenth-century courtly literature. They are particularly pertinent given the range of genres in which feminine voices in dialogue appear.

---

<sup>279</sup> Bruckner, ‘Fictions of the Female Voice’, p. 867.

The chapter begins with two lyric poems, in Occitan and in Old French; the second section considers narratives, looking at dialogue in Chrétien de Troyes' romance *Yvain*, the Old French *lais Chaitivel* and *L'Aüstic*, and the Occitan romance *Flamenca*. Section three looks at the shepherdess in *pastorelas* and *pastourelles*, and the final section considers parody, in the Old French *fabliaux* *Berengier au lonc cul* and the *Jugement des cons*. This generic range prompts questions about whether the feminine voice works differently in different genres or linguistic traditions, and how a reader can differentiate between a feminine voice designed to be read seriously, and one which parodies the courtly tradition. The chapter moves from genres which are at the serious end of the spectrum, to those which are more clearly parodic. The *pastorelas* and the *fabliaux* subvert courtly paradigms, taking up their conventions and undermining them, with radically differing generic expectations from the courtly texts. This move from 'serious' to parodic allows me to consider whether humour gives feminine voices the opportunity to explore an escape from the binary – whether the differing horizons, which expect humour and subversion, allow the creation of multiple models of femininity, or whether dialogue, the constant through these differing genres, constrains parodic feminine voices within a strict binary.

### **Section One: *Tensos* and *Jeux-Partis***

The Occitan *ensos* and the Old French *jeux-partis* are a locus in which feminine voices can take on masculine counterparts on formally equal terms. I will look at a lyric from each language which addresses female desire. Each features a feminine and a masculine voice in debate, and presents the opportunity to open the chapter

with a genre which favours feminine voices. This genre is performative, and frequently comic, without necessarily moving to parody.<sup>280</sup> Within these generic boundaries, I shall ask how these debate lyrics shape the feminine voices they contain – does the form, which imposes dialectic on the voices, alter each voice's position, and what impact does a feminine voice have on the masculine stance? Finally, I shall ask what effect a feminine voice has when she espouses physical passion, a position not normally associated with the courtly *domna*. Can this be read as a genuine position, or is the feminine voice pushed by the debate form into a position which acts out a male fantasy?

The two lyrics are 'Rofin, diguatz m'ades de quors' (PC 249a.1 = 426.1), between Domna H and Rofin; and 'Douce dame, vos aveis prins marit' (R1054), between a Dame and Rolant de Reims. 'Rofin, diguatz' was probably written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century; the voices debate which of two lovers Domna H would prefer: the timid one who abides by an oath not to go further than holding and kissing her, and the bold lover who would break his oath and seduce her. She chooses the latter.<sup>281</sup>

Domna H opens the lyric, immediately introducing the theme of knowledge and power: her masculine interlocutor is *conoissens* (2); the lady who must decide this dilemma is *coinda e valens* (3); each lover must *jur e pliva* (5), committing them to a juridical framework:

---

<sup>280</sup> See Gravdal's definition of parody and satire: 'Parody is a textual play on literary traditions and conventions, while satire is a literary commentary on the real world, usually meliorative in its pragmatism'. *Vilain and Courtois*, p. 6.

<sup>281</sup> Harvey and Paterson date this *partimen* to the late twelfth century (pp. 836-38); the identity of Domna H is still debated. Chambers ('*Las trobairitz soiseubudas*', p. 54) argues that Domna H is fictitious; Rieger argues that she is real (*Trobairitz*, p. 304). Harvey and Paterson argue that Rofin is Rufinus, the twelfth-century canon lawyer, but accept that the interlocutors may both be fictitious (p. 838).



Rofin, diguatz m'ades de quors  
 Cals fetz meills, car etz conoissens:  
 Una domna coinda e valens  
 Qui, eu sai, ha dos amadors  
 E vol q'usqecs jur e pliva,  
 Enans que.lz voilla ab si colgar,  
 Que plus mas tener e baisar  
 No.ill faran; e l'uns s'abriva  
 El fag, qe sagramen no.ill te,  
 L'autre.s no.l ausa far per re. (1-10)

Rofin, tell me now straight away which of these men acted better, since you are an expert: a charming and worthy lady who, as I know, has two lovers requires that each shall give his word and swear an oath, before she will take either of them into her bed, that they will do no more to her then embrace and kiss; but the one loses no time in making love to her, breaking his promise, whereas the other dare not do so for anything in the world.

Power, and who is in control, is introduced by Domna H's legal vocabulary. The lovers' oath echoes the feudal oath binding knight to lord. This locks both parties into a relationship with clearly defined rights and responsibilities, where the Lady retains some control – a position challenged by Rofin. His response in stanza two is that a courtly lover should be controlled by *amors* (14, 'puois lo destreing amors'), moving the framework for the relationship away from the law and toward love as an independent arbiter. Control is Rofin's watchword, and self-control should merit

reward and recognition from his lady ('e l'autre.s deu trobar merce', 20, while the other ought to find her compassionate).

Domna H picks up Rofin's vocabulary, using the same verb, *destreing*:

Qe.l desirs e.l sobre-talens

Lo destreing tant... (23-24)

For he is so possessed by longing and excessive desire...

The force which should control the lover is not *amors*, but *desirs e.l sobre-talens*. This widens the gap between the two lovers, one of whom sticks to the oath, and one of whom tries to exceed it. As well as nominating two different third parties as referees, the voices establish different prizes. For Rofin, the lover competes for *merce* (20); for Domna H he competes for physical consummation of his love. Domna H thus presents the lady as embodying the prize of *merce*; a lover should be so out of control he has no idea what he is doing:

L'amors corals recaliva

Tant fort que non au ni non ve

No conois qan fai mal o be (28-30)

Passionate love burns with such a flame that he neither hears nor sees, nor does he know when he acting well or ill.

Domna H sets up a correlation between being a better lover, lack of self-control, and action, and she returns to it in stanza five, where she repeats that *l'arditz* (45,

the 'bold lover') is the one most worthy of his lady. Equally, any lady who chooses Rofin's model of lover should be blamed:

E domna q'aital drut mescre

Mal creira cel qui s'en recre. (49-50)

And any lady who turns her back on such a lover will do ill to put her trust in the one who is too cowardly to win her.

She aligns courtliness with the chivalric quality of boldness, but Rofin attacks Domna H on the basis that she isn't adhering to courtly values, that she is operating outside the courtly system:

E qui.l mante sap pauc d'amar

Q'amans, puois fin'amors viva

Lo destreing, tem sa domna... (57-59)

And anyone who defends him knows little about loving, for a lover, once true love has him in its power, goes in fear of his lady...

Rofin attacks the feminine voice's premise and language, which is the only way she can participate in the debate, and compounds this in his *tornada* where he asserts that he need not worry about giving his word on this matter (67, 'De mi non cal qu'ieu o pliva'). The feminine voice's control over love and language is so tenuous that the masculine voice can effectively check out of the linguistic process. The motif of language dominates the lyric: the oath, the terms of the agreement, and the silent lady brought to life by the feminine voice.

Domna H sets out a feminine value system, in which she defines her preferred model of masculinity, a model not policed by *amors*. This *tenso* has split scholars, with Kay calling it ‘an alibi for masculine sexual desire’, to which Bruckner responds ‘I am sympathetic to Kay’s analysis of the dangers concealed in masking male aggression with feminine desire, but I am still uncomfortable with a position that denies women the possibility of saying certain things just because they may appear to coincide with misogynistic clichés said by men’.<sup>282</sup> I suggest that the aggression of the message, rather than the message itself, is what has condemned Domna H to the status of a fictive interlocutor. The concept of a feminine voice which uses dialogue and the rhetoric of the masculine voice to redefine her ideal lover is surprising and to some unpalatable. It is precisely this ability to use her opponent’s formal and thematic devices, though, which keeps the voice of Domna H feminine – the ability to operate in this way, while differentiating themselves just enough, is a hallmark of feminine voices throughout the courtly canon. Domna H uses the extremes of culturally assigned positions – distant, asexual *domna* versus carnal lover – and uses the back and forth of dialogue to position herself nearer the carnal end of the spectrum while remaining part of the courtly hierarchy. She manages to resist the binaries assigned to her by the form and by masculine expectations, pushing at the edges of acceptability and forcing her interlocutor to acknowledge the difference in approach. She does this from a position of strength: she is the object of desire, the speaking reward who has what the lovers want. As she moves from being a silent goal to a subject who articulates her own desire, the force of her move from one definable position to another forces Rofin to react.

---

<sup>282</sup> Kay, *Subjectivity*, p. 99; Bruckner, ‘Debatable Fictions’, p. 23.

However, the other lyric I shall consider here features a feminine voice – the anonymous ‘Douce Dame’ – who begins from a different position. This feminine voice is married, and the dilemma involves her husband, rather than a lover. She is thus an already-traded commodity, rather than one being sought. Rolant de Reims asks the Dame whether she would rather have complete possession of her husband, even though he desires other ladies, or whether she would prefer to be the sole object of his affections, even though he sleeps with other women. The dilemma sets up a division between physical and emotional intimacy, inviting the Dame to decide which is more important to her (7, ‘plus chier’). Doss-Quinby’s point, that ‘When women broach a subject, whether arguing with a man or with each other, they seem particularly attentive to the woman’s role in a relationship, intent on defining how a woman should act towards a lover, and the extent to which she should respect the principles of *fin’amors*’ is clearly played out here.<sup>283</sup> Physical intimacy is presented in terms of power over someone (‘Ou lou pooir de lui entierement’, 8, complete power over him), and this option is taken up by the Dame, who responds:

Je pran lou poir mon marit, jou vos di,

Que j’ai bien cors por teil fais a portoir. (14-15)

I will take my husband’s power, I tell you, since I have the will to do such a thing.

She continues in the same vein, focusing on the benefits of tangible power over her husband:

---

<sup>283</sup> Doss-Quinby, ‘The Feminine Voice in the Old French “jeu-parti”’, p. 505.

Sa volentei soit par tout otroïe,

Mais ke j'aie de lui la druwerie. (17-18)

May his desire be pledged everywhere, as long as I will have power over him.

The twist in this lyric is, of course, that the lady in question is not considering the role of a courtly lover and his lady, but is quite specifically thinking about the role of a husband and his wife. The husband's role is to continue wooing other ladies, placing him in the position of husband and courtly lover, so the lyric forces the feminine voice to negotiate a role not often given a voice within courtly literature – that of the wife who knows her husband continues to love elsewhere. She is explicit about a wife's role:

Feme ne vaut qui n'ait joie d'amors

Et qui n'en sent nuit et jour lai dousour. (21-22)

A wife is worth nothing if she doesn't have joy from love, and if she doesn't enjoy, night and day, sweetness there.

The Dame links possession, happiness, and physical love, and discards the emotional side of courtly love, while the masculine voice prizes emotions over possession. As one might perhaps expect from a voice which articulates the conventional position, there is a nod to physicality but more of a focus on emotion and a masculine association with reason:

Je lou vos voil bien par raison monstreir.

Leiz vo mari gixeis, or soit ansi,

Et bien santeis qu'il ait boin poir d'ovreir (24-26)

I very much want to show this to you through reason. Leave your husband there, let it be so, and you will soon know that he's more than capable of action.

The feminine position is by implication linked to a lack of reason and knowledge of the courtly system, and Rolant goes on to specify the particular emotion she will feel – jealousy:

Jalozie vos court sus maintenant

Et fait panceir qu'il aime autre ke vos,

Dont vos aveis et mezaixe et corrous. (31-33)

Jealousy will seize you from now on, and make you think that he loves a lady other than you, and you will suffer and be angry.

The Dame suggests a physical answer to the dilemma, claiming that she is most interested in physical fulfillment and possession of her husband, with emotional connection a secondary need. Jealousy seems to be a masculine preserve, foisted upon her by the masculine voice; the Dame's solution combines the absolute power and emotional distance of the courtly *domna* with possession of the husband. Rolant, however, espouses a conventional – and binary - view of courtly love, focusing on emotions.

This is not a feminine voice who is 'powerless, rejected, abandoned, forgotten...not because of any social inferiority but because of the inferiority of her gender' which Gravdal identified in the texts of the *trobairitz*; arguably, both the Dame and Domna H react to the binary structure imposed on them by the poetic form by acknowledging their position at one end of an opposition (emotional versus

physical) but tweaking this.<sup>284</sup> Each anonymous feminine voice uses the language of courtly love, working within its linguistic framework, but suggests a solution which not regulated by courtly love. The lyrics present anonymous femininity in dialogue with named masculine voices, an imbalance which the feminine voices must take into account. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the inability or refusal of their interlocutors to name them, neither feminine voice gives much weight to *amors*, preferring instead the type of power and regulation that they can control. The 'good' lover, for the two feminine voices, becomes the man they can see in front of them, doing things they can see and manage, which force the lover into real interaction with the lady. In other words, they each push the female figure into the centre of what they deem a satisfactory exchange and occupy the very position which they both should and should not take up. By this I mean that the masculine voice wants his lady to accede to his requests, while simultaneously needing her to remain distant so that he can continue the cycle of desire and song. A feminine voice who speaks and, more than this, articulates a wish for an active lover, moves into a space in which she both answers and does not answer the masculine voice's stated desires. As Shapiro argues in relation to the *cansos* of the *trobairitz*, this speaking voice 'transform[s] her into a mortal and desiring creature, like a man, but otherwise automatically relegated to inferior status'.<sup>285</sup> These feminine voices make the physical presence of the woman a prerequisite, and do so by taking the terms used by the masculine voice and building on them, acknowledging the parameters of the debate but shifting the approach to reflect her position, a move which sees her reacting to the power systems in place in a 'productive' or positive manner.

---

<sup>284</sup> Gravdal, 'Mimicry, Metonymy, and "Women's Song"', p. 415.

<sup>285</sup> Shapiro, 'The Provençal *Trobairitz*', p. 563.



The next section, which looks at feminine desire within narrative dialogue, will ask what impact a different form has on the construction of gender, and how clearly one can trace the influence of lyric on narrative. Do narratives offer feminine voices a choice between the distant *domna* or the carnal lover, with no other alternatives, as we have seen in ‘Rofin, diguatz’ and ‘Douce dame’, or do they explore other feminine types? I argue that narrative dialogues allow a more playful exploration of gender, which often uses irony and, at times, parody, giving its feminine voices greater – if still limited – scope for self-expression than the rigid binaries imposed by the formal constraints of the lyric.

## Section Two: Narratives

The corpus moves from early in the courtly romance tradition (the second half of the eleventh century) to relatively late (the second half of the thirteenth century), allowing observation of the way in which the tradition evolved. I consider the texts in order of composition, beginning with Chrétien de Troyes’ *Yvain*, which is dated to 1177.<sup>286</sup> This is followed by two *lais* (shorter narratives, often with supernatural and Celtic elements) by Marie de France: *L’Aüstic* and *Chaitivel*. These were written before 1189, and treat the theme of frustrated love.<sup>287</sup> My last narrative text is the Occitan romance *Flamenca*, (c.1275).<sup>288</sup> This narrative was composed later than those of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France, and has a different take on courtliness, often descending into parody.<sup>289</sup> These narratives contain feminine

---

<sup>286</sup> *Yvain*, ed. by Hult, p. 10.

<sup>287</sup> *Lais de Marie de France*, ed. by Laurence Harf-Lancner and Karl Warnke, p. 10.

<sup>288</sup> *Flamenca*, ed. by Huchet, p. 13.

<sup>289</sup> Muscatine describes *Flamenca* as a romance ‘in which the conventions and values of the genre have been placed under the heaviest strain they can bear without disintegrating’; *Chaucer and the French Tradition*, p. 55.

voices in dialogue, all of whom present independent views, some of which are contrary to those of their masculine interlocutors. I ask how narratives construct gender within dialogue given the forward motion of plot development, and whether this allows these characters to resist or exploit the boundaries imposed on them by dialectic and dialogue.

*Yvain's* heroine, Laudine, is faced with a difficult choice: should she marry the man who murdered her husband? As her maid Lunete points out, he has the requisite fighting skills to defend her land, and the situation is time-pressured, with Arthur and his entourage due to arrive at her fountain within the week (1614-18).<sup>290</sup> Vance describes Lunete as a merchant in Chrétien's 'economy of love', expressing a 'terrifying, yet marvelous, power of change and exchange', and I suggest that this notion can be applied to the dialogue between Laudine, Lunete and *Yvain*, which is subject to constant flux as each manipulates it to his or her own ends, using dialogue to bridge opposing needs.<sup>291</sup> Laudine knows that her barons are in mourning (1246-47); she needs *Yvain's* skills. How does she negotiate these concerns while remaining within the cultural expectations of a courtly woman, in a scene which plays on the *domna* – lover relationship of the Occitan courtly lyric?<sup>292</sup>

Laudine opens negotiations with the hauteur of a courtly *domna*; she has Lunete summon *Yvain* to her presence in the confident expectation that he will appear

---

<sup>290</sup> As Hunt points out, the dialogue is framed by dialectic from the start: '*Yvain's* exercise of his military prowess so far has only incurred Laudine's hatred. Yet in order to remarry it is precisely the question of her suitor's military prowess on which Laudine must be satisfied'. 'The Dialectic of "*Yvain*"', p. 291.

<sup>291</sup> Vance, 'Chrétien's *Yvain* and the Ideologies of Change and Exchange', p. 52.

<sup>292</sup> See Gaunt's *Gender and Genre*, pp. 122-79, which discusses Chrétien de Troyes' knowledge of the Occitan courtly lyric, and Topsfield's *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 186, which describes *Yvain* as 'in the condition of the lover...such themes are found in the poetry of contemporary troubadours such as Raimbaut d'Aurenga, Peire d'Alvernhe and the later Arnaut Daniel'.

(‘Alez! Ja plus ne delaiez!’, 1877, Go! Don’t delay any longer!); when he does, he is duly described as fearful (1948-49). She relies on secrecy as the prerequisite for dialogue:

...Viengne dont tost,

Celeement et en repost. (1901-2)

May he come quickly, secretly and quietly.

This secrecy, a central component for a courtly exchange explored in more detail in Chapter Two, is compromised by the presence of Lunete, a triangular dynamic which emphasizes the purported dominance of the female voice in this exchange. Lunete briefs Yvain as she leads him to her mistress, emphasizing Laudine’s anger at her maid and reassuring him of Laudine’s wish to imprison him body and heart:

Qu’elle vous veut en sa prison,

Et si veult si avoir le cors

Que nez li cuers n’en soit pas fors. (1924-26)

That she wants you in her prison, and would like to have your body so that even your heart is not exempt.

At this stage Yvain and Laudine conform to the behaviour expected of courtly lovers, with Lunete espousing the ‘absolute valorization of physical strength’.<sup>293</sup> As Yvain enters Laudine remains silent, increasing his fear (1955-56, ‘La dame qui ne lor dit mot / Et pour ce plus grant poour ot’). Yvain is forced to open the dialogue, and does so ‘comme vraiz amis’ (1976, like a true courtly lover), another hint that

---

<sup>293</sup> Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 60.

the dialogue is undercut by irony. The extra-textual audience knows that Lunete and Laudine have already identified Yvain as an appropriate knight, good marriage material – as a model of masculinity they desperately need – but before they can use him in this way he must go through a process which requires the linguistic skills of a different model of masculinity, that of the (clerical) courtly lover.

Yvain combines the abjection of the lover with the aggression of the knight, managing Laudine's response from the start:

«Dame, ja voir ne criëray  
Merci, ainz vous merciëray  
De quanque vous me vouroiz fere,  
Que riens ne me porroit desplere. (1977-80)

Lady, truly I will never beg for mercy, but will thank you for what you would like to do for me, since nothing [that you do] could ever displease me.

This pushes Laudine toward the role of distant lady, who, the moment she responds, becomes part of the relationship of rights and responsibilities his speech suggests. Laudine's responses to Yvain's assurances that he has placed himself wholesale in her power, and has done so because he trusts her implicitly (1982-83; 1988-91) become ever more extreme, threatening death (1981) and total control over him (1985-86). Yvain protests his innocence in killing her husband (2005-6), forcing Laudine to admit that killing Yvain wouldn't make any difference ('Et je cuit que riens ne vaudroit / Quant fet ocire vous aroie', 2008-9, And I think that it wouldn't be worth anything, if I had you killed).

Laudine asks the crucial question – why Yvain consents to be so completely in her power:

Dont celle force puet venir

Qui vous commande a consentir

Touz mes vouldirs sans contredit (2011-13)

Where can this force come from, which commands you to consent to all my wishes without contradiction?

Absolving Yvain on the spot of any crime (2014), Laudine gives him the opening to speak of love, and he duly does so, giving an Ovidian account of his senses giving in, one by one, to the force of love:

- Dame, fet il, la force vient

De mon cuer, qui a vous se tient ;

...Dame, mi oil. – Et les oilz, qui?

- La grant biautés quë en vous vi. (2017-18; 2021-22)

Lady, he says, the force comes from my heart, which belongs to you...Lady, my eyes.

- And who put it in your eyes?

- The great beauty which I see in you.

This process, a quickfire dialogue with the voices frequently changing within one line, leads Yvain to the key point in his use of the language of the courtly lover: Laudine's beauty has made him fall in love with her ('– Dame, tant quë amer me fait', 2024, Lady, so much that it makes me love). Laudine is subjected to eight

lines of exposition on the depth of Yvain's love, which uses anaphora ('En tel que...' is repeated six times) to convince her of his feelings. However, the formulaic approach is ironic - Yvain mouths courtly formulae instead of speaking from the heart.

Laudine immediately asks whether Yvain could defend her fountain:

- Et oseriez vous entreprendre

Pour moy ma fontaine a deffendre? (2035-36)

And would you dare to take on the defence of my fountain for me?

The sudden switch in topic, from love and its associated emotions (2027-34) to the baldly practical, is followed, once Yvain agrees, by a swift end to the dialogue. Laudine closes the deal with Yvain ('Sachiez donc bien, acordez sommes', 2038, Know well then that we are agreed) and with her barons:

Et dist: «De ci nous en alonz

En celle sale ou mes genz sont

(Qui loué et conseillé m'ont

Por le besoing quë il y voient). (2042-45)

And she said: 'Let's go from here into the room where my men are (who have advised and guided me because of the need they see).

Dialogue is used by the characters to expose, for the extra-textual audience and those characters 'in the know', the reality behind the language. However, only the narrator and the extra-textual audience are aware of the full situation, with all the

characters aware of sections of the reality behind each character's actions and language. Dialogue creates the 'ironic intention' which Hunt locates in a marriage 'achieved through the stage-managing of a wily *entremetteuse* and the dictates of power politics'.<sup>294</sup> The extra-textual audience knows that Yvain needs a wife and a position as the defender of the fountain which can give him status and identity in the Arthurian milieu, although Yvain may not be aware of this, and Laudine needs a fighter who can defend her lands, but isn't aware of Yvain's Arthurian background. In order to get what they need, she must be the courtly lady amazed and delighted by her knight's declaration of love, he the courtly lover overwhelmed by love and at ease with emotion: the irony weaved through the dialogue negates Vance's contention that 'in this romance, such transactions are made conspicuously subject to the free consent of the woman as marital partner'.<sup>295</sup> However, Laudine's dialogue does not allow her to break free from the courtly system: it simply allows her to alter her position within it. This move is enabled by the neat reversal of what Krueger describes as 'marriage by coercion' – Chrétien reverses 'the terms of the capture: Yvain is the prisoner, the victim of Amors, and Laudine is the unwitting agent of vengeance for her husband's death'.<sup>296</sup> Her movement toward the idea that Yvain should be her new husband is prompted by dialogue with another feminine voice (Lunete) whose focus on the practical is embraced by Laudine: both feminine voices enable Yvain's aggression, which borders on rape.<sup>297</sup> As Tasker Grimbert observes, Lunete uses Yvain's chivalric skills to clinch her argument (lines 1613-16 and 1692-97), and is such a good speaker that Laudine's change of heart

---

<sup>294</sup> Hunt, *Yvain*, p. 34.

<sup>295</sup> Vance, 'Chrétien's Yvain', p. 50.

<sup>296</sup> Krueger, *Women Readers*, p. 41.

<sup>297</sup> Gravdal argues that Chrétien's rape scenes 'poeticize the moral and military heroism of Arthur's knights', a comment which could be applied to this scene. 'Chrétien de Troyes, Gratian, and the Medieval Romance of Sexual Violence', p. 584.

almost appears normal: 'Le jeu de Lunete est tellement bien mené que le retournement dans l'attitude de sa dame finit par paraître presque normal'.<sup>298</sup> Once Laudine has been convinced by Lunete's argument, she uses dialectic to obtain the fighter she needs, balancing the 'rather disconcerting combination of emotion and practical necessity, freedom and compulsion, desire and *raison d'état*'.<sup>299</sup>

Laudine's brief moment of movement is also seen in Marie de France's *lais Chaitivel* and *L'Aüstic*, which deal with frustrated love, and are set in Brittany.<sup>300</sup> Each features a lady whose engagement with the world of courtly love is mediated by men; in both *lais* dialogue allows the feminine characters to express their feelings, whether positive or frustrated. I suggest that, as in *Yvain*, dialogue permits the feminine voice a moment of self-expression, but only through the prism of courtly language and conventions.<sup>301</sup>

*Chaitivel* is the story of how the *lai* came to be composed. It tells of a lady who has four lovers, all knights full of prowess. She treats them well, but one Easter they take part in a tournament which ends with three being killed. The fourth knight is severely wounded 'around his thighs' (123, 'par mi la quisse'), a wound which renders him useless as a lover, and effectively incapacitated. The lady is left to mourn the dead and provide for the fourth knight. One day, visiting the patient, she speaks of her feelings to him, and suggests that she will compose a *lai* about the four knights.

---

<sup>298</sup> Tasker Grimbert, "*Yvain*" dans *le miroir*, p. 45.

<sup>299</sup> Hunt, *Yvain*, p. 54.

<sup>300</sup> See Burgess' *Lais of Marie de France*, pp. 7-17, which supports Illingworth's thesis that these two lays are linked by geographical setting and use of traditional Breton material, as well as being written at roughly the same time.

<sup>301</sup> Edition cited *Lais de Marie de France*, ed. by Harf-Lancner and Warnke; translation my own.



The lady is prompted to speak by the enquiries of the knight, and sets out her regrets:

'Amis', fet ele, 'jeo pensoue  
E vos cumpaignuns remembreue.  
Ja mes dame de mun parage  
Tant nen iert bele, pruz ne sage,  
Tels quatre ensemble n'amera  
Ne en un jur si nes perdra,  
Fors vus tut sul ki nafrez fustes (193-99)

'Friend', she said, 'I was thinking and remembering your companions. Never will a lady of my breeding, however beautiful, worthy and wise she may be, love four such men together nor lose them in one day, except for you who were wounded.

The focus here is entirely on the feminine perspective, and how posterity (through language) will remember her and her story; whether the lady's actions are 'rooted in selfishness' as Clifford suggests is open to debate.<sup>302</sup> The *lai* inverts expectations, starting with the deaths and wounding at the tournament, through to the feminine voice articulating her thoughts, and an ambivalent ending which focuses on the naming of the text.<sup>303</sup> The link between language, reputation and emotions is made at the start of the dialogue, with the feminine voice eager to shape her own destiny

---

<sup>302</sup> Clifford, *Marie de France: Lais*, p. 32.

<sup>303</sup> Ferguson picks out *Chaitivel* as a *lai* which inverts expectations: 'In *Le chaitivel* the tragic ending after a tournament in which no knight is victorious is the reverse of folktale types 850-69, The Princess's Hand is Won, and of Type 508, Bride Won in a Tournament. Marie's ending goes against the natural expectation exemplified in the folktales that in a contest someone will win'. 'Folklore', p. 8.

by recording events as she saw them. She sets herself within the courtly love tradition, as the only woman who has experienced this type of pain.<sup>304</sup> The implication is that her pain is unique while her lovers are expendable. The fourth knight's response is that his suffering should be at the heart of this story:

'Dame, faites le lai novel,  
Si l'apelez Le Chaitivel! (207-8)

'Lady, compose this new *lai*, but call it *Chaitivel* [the unfortunate one]'

The moment the masculine voice joins the dialogue the focus is inverted. He moves it away from the lady and onto him alone, in an exact mirror of her thoughts. The knight argues that his dead companions are no longer suffering on the lady's behalf (211, 'Li alter sunt pieç'a finé'), but that his suffering continues:

Mes jo ki sui eschapez vis,  
Tuz esguarez e tuz chaitis,  
Ceo qu'el siecle puis plus amer  
Vei sovent venir e aler  
Parler od mei matin e seir,  
Si n'en puis nule joie aveir  
Ne de baisier ne d'acoler  
Ne d'altre bien fors de parler. (215-22)

But I, who have escaped with my life, completely ruined and completely unfortunate, I often see she who I love more than anything else in this life coming

---

<sup>304</sup> Cowling describes her final words to the knight as follows: 'Implicit in her words to him as well as in his condition is the fact that she has lost any possibility for happiness'. 'The Image of the Tournament in Marie de France's *Le Chaitivel*', p. 691.

and going. I speak to her morning and night, but I can't have any joy from this, not kissing and hugging, nor any other good things except talking.

This statement is a bitter testament to his physical impotence, which leaves the knight without any clear role in the courtly story. Like the lady, he focuses on language, but does so from the opposite end of the spectrum. The lady sees language as her opportunity to shape her place in literary history.<sup>305</sup> For her, speech is a memorial and a way of processing her feelings. However, talking is the last thing the knight wishes to do – he is clear that he would rather die, and that the lady is prolonging his suffering (by implication with her speech and, worse, her speech that puts herself at its centre):

Tels cent mals me faites souffrir,  
Mielz me valdreit la mort tenir. (223-24)

It would be better for me to die, than to suffer these hundred ills at your hand.

The knight's wish to avoid speech but ensure that his suffering is placed at the centre of any linguistic record is, it seems, granted:

'Par fei', fet ele, 'ceo m'est bel.  
Or l'apelum 'Le Chaitivel'. (229-30)

'My god', she said, 'That seems good to me. So let's call it *Chaitivel*.'

---

<sup>305</sup> Burgess describes her as having 'a good deal more control over her own affairs than many of Marie's heroines...She evidently considers herself to be of high birth'. *Lais of Marie de France*, p. 111.

I suggest that the lady has the last laugh, setting out as she has the full story of the knight's selfishness, assisted by the narrator's comment that 'Chascuns des nuns bien i afiert' (236, Both names fit it well). The dialogue has not resolved the *jeu-parti*-like debate over the *lai*'s name nor the power struggle between feminine and masculine speech, with the narrator stating that 'Le Chaitivel a nun en us' (237, The unfortunate one is the name in use).<sup>306</sup> The lady's desire to articulate her pain in a *lai*, using language to recount her emotions, demonstrates a more sophisticated understanding of the power of words than that articulated by the knight, albeit his wish to name the *lai* after him is granted.

*L'Aüstic* describes the plight of another unfortunate lady. This *lai* tells of a lady caught between two worthy knights. Married to one, the 'sage, curteise e acesmee' (14, wise, courtly, and graceful) lady eventually falls in love with the other, in part because she hears only good things about him (27, 'tant pur le bien qu'ele en oï'). Living just next door to her lover, she is able to speak to him from the window of her bedroom, and they exchange gifts by throwing them across the narrow gap. While they cannot meet, they console themselves by talking night and day (52-53, 'U fust par nuit, u fust par jur / qu'ensemble poeient parler'). This happy compromise ends abruptly one spring, just when love is traditionally blooming, when the nocturnal trip to the window wakes the husband. The lady says she's at the window to listen to the nightingale, so the husband traps and kills it, and throws it at her. She wraps it in silk, and embroiders the story onto it. She sends it to the knight, who places the corpse in a bejeweled gold casket which he carries with him always.

---

<sup>306</sup> Gaunt describes the final verses thus: 'The text is open to interpretation and the alternative titles flag diverging readings according to which either the lady or the knight should be pitied and seen as the subject of the text, but not both (as the knight makes clear).' *Retelling the Tale*, p. 65.

The dialogue between the lady and her husband highlights the role of language within courtly love, but does so as part of a broader commentary on communication, much of which can be done via (silent) signs: Marie's *lais* are preoccupied with 'the act of retelling'. As Bruckner argues, 'the many examples of retelling included in the collection as a whole demonstrate that Marie's awareness of the complexity of this process is not ideologically predetermined'.<sup>307</sup> *L'aüstic* uses dialogue, spoken and silent, to figure entrapment and victimisation.<sup>308</sup> As Griffin points out, this *lai* is built around absence: 'At the heart of this lai is multiple absence: the absence of life from the body of the nightingale, which is wrapped and encased in artefacts of beauty, and carried around to represent a love which was never given physical presence or expression'.<sup>309</sup> The dialogue is part of a story consciously built by the feminine voice to communicate her lack of love. The lady opens the dialogue with carefully-worded praise of the nightingale:

'Sire', la dame li respunt,  
 'il nen a joie en icest mund,  
 Ki nen ot l'aüstic chanter;  
 Pur ceo me vois ici ester  
 ...Tant me delite et tant le vueil  
 Que jeo ne puis dormir de l'ueil.' (83-86; 89-90)

---

<sup>307</sup> Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, p. 187.

<sup>308</sup> As discussed by Brightenback in 'The *Metamorphoses* and Narrative *Conjointure* in "Deuz Amanz," "Yonec," and "Le Laüstic"', p. 5.

<sup>309</sup> Griffin, 'Gender and Authority in the Medieval French Lai', p. 45.

'Sir', the lady answers him, 'he who hasn't heard the nightingale sing hasn't had joy in this world; that is why you see me here...it delights me so much and I want it so much that I can't sleep a wink.'

The lovers use the nightingale to communicate, but, as Freeman argues, the lady 'misdirects this sort of language [the discourse of love], aiming it at her nonlover (the Husband), in fact at the traditional character (within the lyric frame) who would oppose such language, who would not perceive it as a meaningful metaphor...She transposes this image out of its proper context of love and song into the context of ordinary colloquy and explanation'.<sup>310</sup> Even the bird chosen is a bird to which one listens, rather than observes, reinforcing the *lai's* focus on dialogue, through language or signs.<sup>311</sup> The husband traps and kills the nightingale, telling his wife he has solved the problem:

Jeo ai l'aüstic engignié,  
Pur quei vus avez tant veillié.  
Des or poëz gisir en pais;  
Il ne vus esveillera mais! (107-10)

I have captured the nightingale, which has kept you awake so much. From now on you can sleep in peace, he won't wake you up any more!

The husband speaks to his silent wife, who speaks to the bird – each character engaging in dialogue with a person or object which cannot answer. Each character

---

<sup>310</sup> Freeman, 'Marie de France's Poetics of Silence', p. 868.

<sup>311</sup> See Bloch's comment that 'Nowhere in the lai is the presence of a voice anything but a substitute for something else...the nightingale...is itself nothing more than the sign of a ruse or lie told to calm the jealous husband's suspicions, an invention synonymous with the lai itself'. *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 134.

knowingly uses 'faux semblants' in dialogue: 'Elle prétendait se lever à cause du rossignol. Il fera semblant de prendre soin du sommeil de la dame et supprimera le rossignol'.<sup>312</sup>

The wife laments the nightingale's demise:

'Lasse', fet ele, 'mal m'estait!

Ne purrai mes la nuit lever

N'aler a la fenestre ester,

U jeo sueil mun ami veeir. (126-29)

'Alas', she said, 'how unfortunate I am! I will never be able to get up in the night and go and stand by the window, where I used to see my lover.'

She interpellates her silent lover, conflating him with the bird she said she loved listening to.<sup>313</sup> This is another one-sided suggested dialogue reminiscent of the frustrated dialogue of the *trobairitz* seen in Chapter Three (as Polak argues, the lady is described in terms which echo those of the 'courtly *domina*':<sup>314</sup>

L'aüstic or li trametrai,

L'aventure li manderai! (133-34)

I will therefore give him the nightingale, and send him the story!

---

<sup>312</sup> Ménard, *Les lais de Marie de France*, p. 105.

<sup>313</sup> Mickel, 'A Reconsideration of the *Lais* of Marie de France', p. 56, emphasises the nightingale's position as a symbol: 'the sight of his loved one, [is] represented by the bird'.

<sup>314</sup> Polak, 'Two Lines From Marie de France's *Laüstic*', p. 257.

The lady's message is appropriated by her lover: 'The lady's text is taken away from her forever, placed in a casket that will prevent others from reading it: her writing is tightly sealed off from the world, its meaning dictated by the knight's interpretation (or mis-interpretation?)'.<sup>315</sup> The lady's ability to dominate all forms of dialogue, spoken, suggested, and silent, makes her central to this *lai*.<sup>316</sup> Again, this is a feminine voice trapped by a system she cannot control, who grasps the opportunity to make a small difference in her circumstances. Her nightingale becomes a fulcrum for a story which highlights dialogue: alive it represents dialogue, and dead and wrapped in samite, it becomes a 'visual cue for textual reference'.<sup>317</sup>

The feminine voices of *L'Aüstic* and *Chaitivel* take part in the courtly system on a straightforward basis – they speak despite the focus of the narratives being 'conflicts...between male protagonists'.<sup>318</sup> The final feminine voice that I shall consider is far less straightforward. Written nearly a century later than the texts of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France, *Flamenca* presents a different view of the courtly world.<sup>319</sup> Its parodic tone – some critics have likened the text to a *fabliau* – operates throughout, extracting humour from the juxtaposition of events, and the author's ability to undermine courtly stereotypes.<sup>320</sup> The dialogue I shall examine references a troubadour lyric, and comes at a point when the heroine, Flamenca, engages in dialogue with Guilhem when she takes communion. Over the course of

---

<sup>315</sup> Gaunt, *Retelling*, p. 62.

<sup>316</sup> Freeman describes the lady's mastery of communication as follows: 'She is responsible for the transformation of the one into the other [the lover into the nightingale], as a protective disguise...The Lady...[resorts to] her art of transformation for a second time. The silent shrouded body of the nightingale becomes the occasion for a gloss, another explanation of her absence, recounted to a second male audience by proxy'. 'The Changing Figure of the Male', p. 246.

<sup>317</sup> Whalen, *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory*, p. 90.

<sup>318</sup> Burgess, 'Chivalry and Prowess in the *Lais* of Marie de France', p. 151.

<sup>319</sup> *Flamenca*, ed. by Huchet, p.13.

<sup>320</sup> See, for example, Shedd, "'Flamenca': A Medieval Satire on Courtly Love", p. 46.



several weeks, they exchange one or two syllables every time they meet at the altar.

The altar-side dialogue is central to the text: it is the first encounter of the two lovers. It sees two voices engaged in a dialogue which knowingly replicates that contained in lyrics by Peire Rogier and Giraut de Bornelh, and is interleaved between long passages in which the two characters agonise over what the previous installment meant and what they should say next, foregrounding the text's preoccupation with language and with the courtly canon. As Gaunt points out, 'one of the qualities Flamenca admires in Guilhem is his dexterity with language...Guilhem's desirability stems from his linguistic dexterity, and particularly from his ability to perform within the realm of the courtly lyric'.<sup>321</sup>

Guilhem begins with the phrase 'Hai las!' (3949, Alas!). From the start of the dialogue, he invokes the lyrics 'Ges non puesc en bon vers fallir' by Peire Rogier (which includes the lines 'Ailas! – Que plangz? – la tem murir. – Que as? – Am. – E trop? – leu hoc, tan que.n muer. – Mors? – Oc. – Non potz guerir?', 41-43) and 'Ailas, co muer' by Giraut de Bornelh (which runs 'Ailas, co muer! – Qe as, amis? – Eu son trais! – Per cal razon?', 1-3). This is an explicitly literary dialogue in which the masculine voice positions himself as part of a literary tradition in which he is highly educated. What is interesting, though, is that Flamenca, who has been praised as being the best and most courtly lady in the world (1778-79, 'que.l miellers es e li plus bella / e.l plus coresa qu'el mon sia'), replies appropriately.

---

<sup>321</sup> Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p. 150.

After consultation with her maids, she asks Guilhem 'Que plains?' (4344, What troubles you?). This response places her on equal terms with the scholarly Guilhem, signaling the feminine voice's ability to match his rhetorical game. As well as inviting a response, placing her squarely in the dialogue, it underlines Flamenca's courtly credentials and those of her ladies. However, this first question and response prompts anxious moments for both interlocutors, with Guilhem concerned about Flamenca's lack of reaction (3992-4009) and Flamenca and her ladies debating whether his words are evidence of courtly intentions, or whether he was simply mocking her (4131-43). It is only as the dialogue continues that Flamenca and her ladies gain confidence, pushing the dialogue toward mockery of the lyric tradition. As Kay puts it, it is only partway through the dialogue that 'Flamenca is sufficiently persuaded to put 'simulation' (4924, 'fenher') aside and formulate, for the first time, a personal contribution to the dialogue.<sup>322</sup>

Now the two voices are in sync, the consultation (Flamenca with her ladies, Guilhem with himself and with *Amors*) lessens, and he replies: 'Mor mi' (4503, I am dying). Flamenca's lady Margarita comes up with the feminine response, which is 'De que?' (4761, Of what?). This verbal dexterity earns Margarita the compliment that she is a good trobairitz (literally, that she finds or composes words well, and the only attestation of the word):

- Margarida, trop ben t'es pres

E ja iest bona trobairis. (4576-77)

'Margarita, you're too good at this, and you are an excellent trobairitz'.

---

<sup>322</sup> Kay, *Subjectivity* p. 201.

Guilhem's next contribution is the crux of the dialogue; he confesses that he's suffering from love: 'D'amor' (4878, Of love). Again, Flamenca matches his pace, and asks for whom he pines: 'Per qui?' (4940, For who?). Another short gap (of only 28 lines, compared with 395 between the first and second phrases) separates her question from his response: 'Per vos' (4968, For you). Flamenca asks what she can do: 'Qu'en pusc?' (5039, What can I do about it?), and is told that she can heal him: 'Garir' (5096). At this stage not only has the thinking time (and the text) compressed significantly, but the topic has shifted from broad sentiments of pain and assistance to specific and practical questions of love and a meeting. Flamenca asks how she can heal Guilhem ('Conssi?', 5120, how?), and his answer is 'Per gein' (5204, through ruse). The tone has shifted to overt articulation of the practicalities behind the emotions of courtly love; it is this glimpse of these behind the scenes mechanics which provide so much of the humour in this text and this dialogue.

For the first time in the dialogue, Flamenca does not ask a question, but instead responds with an imperative: 'Pren li' (5217, do it). Up till now, she has been the inquisitive voice, responding to Guilhem's leading statements with question after question, and this moment of decisiveness prompts a move to purely practical concerns. The dialogue's concluding exchanges are:

- Pres l'ai (5309)
- E qual? (5403)
- Iretz (5460)
- Es on? (5465)
- Als banz (5467)

- Cora? (5480)

- Jorn breu (5499)

- Plas me (5721)

- I've done it. - So what [ruse]? – You will go. – So where? – To the baths. –  
When? – One day soon. – That pleases me.

The quickfire dialogue lets Flamenca speak her mind, and do so in the context of a learned exchange with the ideal lover whose courtliness contrasts with the brutality of her husband. Flamenca's ability to play the part of the courtly lady is evidenced by her recognition that language is reality: she needs to escape Archambaut's prison, and to do so she must play the courtly game. She does this by responding in Guilhem's terms, and delights in the construction of their dialogue with her maids. The ostensible romance of Guilhem's *amor de lonh* and the seemingly insurmountable obstacle of the jealous husband and the heroine's captivity are, in fact, easily overcome by the Guilhem's cunning. Instead of a slow romance, the dialogue enables a lover to condense his lengthy ruminations on love alone in his room into the briefest messages to his lady. Flamenca, instead of acting as a courtly *domna* should – haughty, distant, and uncommunicative – responds immediately to Guilhem's initiative, suggesting that his words have power. Dialogue is the route to overwhelming love; Topsfield identifies the power of uncontrollable love in relation to the male characters ('In *Flamenca*, when tyrannical love attacks a man, courtly and knightly qualities are of no avail'), but I suggest that it is Flamenca who, in this dialogue, takes up the position of the lover unable to resist the demands of love.<sup>323</sup> Her responses – questions – maintain the dialogue, and like Guilhem her

---

<sup>323</sup> Topsfield, 'Intention and Ideas in "*Flamenca*"', p. 125.

inclination to consider her feelings or the situation decreases as the dialogue progresses.<sup>324</sup>

Flamenca uses her knowledge of the courtly system to navigate its feminine types, explicitly referencing her knowledge of dialectic and using oppositions as she nears her goal of (relative) freedom. She starts as the victim, she is briefly the distant *domna*, before, through her own speech, she becomes the clever, carnal opportunist who capitalises on the chance which fate throws her way, but she never remains for long at either extreme; Damon describes it thus: 'The two terms of the contrast bracket and define the middle ground of sanity and reasonableness...the middle ground is occupied by Flamenca herself, who answers to neither of these special and exaggerated visions'.<sup>325</sup> I suggest that Flamenca does occupy these positions, but does so knowingly and fleetingly.

What she desires is relief from imprisonment, and she achieves this through masculine, courtly language. Flamenca glides between different registers – including parody and humour – grasping the nuances of each. What she is unable to do is resist the advances of her lover. Flamenca's *quid pro quo* is that she must move toward a courtly relationship with Guilhem if she is to escape the unsatisfactory one she has with Archambaut.

All the feminine voices seen in dialogue within narrative use language to tell their own story, to move themselves from one position to another. Each is able to participate in the courtly game in a knowing way. They use language to express

---

<sup>324</sup> See Kay, 'The Contrasting Use of Time in the Romances of « Jaufre » and « Flamenca »', pp. 57-60, which discusses the pacing of this dialogue.

<sup>325</sup> Damon, 'Courtesy and Comedy in "Le Roman de Flamenca"', p. 613.

desires which may be frustrated but which, thanks to their articulation, are literally read into the record. While their desires may not be fulfilled, these characters are fully cognizant of the system of which they are a part, and they use their entry into language to extract what they can from their masculine interlocutors, giving them a sense of direction not seen in the feminine voices considered in chapters Two and Three.

The next section looks at feminine voices who attempt to resist their suitors – the witty shepherdesses of the *pastorelas* and *pastourelles* who use their linguistic abilities in a different way. They are in dialogue with knights who, of course, could overwhelm them physically, as the texts that entail rape indicate. In order to get what they want, the shepherdesses rely entirely on their linguistic skills. They use their brains and, crucially, humour to outsmart their opponent, coming out on top in a parodic genre which is built around class and gender oppositions.

### **Section Three: *Pastorelas* and *Pastourelles***

*Pastorelas* and their Old French equivalent, *pastourelles*, feature dialogue between two differently-gendered voices. They have a bucolic setting and playful tone, and feature a knight trying, sometimes successfully, to seduce a shepherdess. The earliest extant example of the genre is Marcabru's 'L'autrier jost'una sebissa', which is dated to between 1130 and the late 1140s, and the genre was certainly popular - around 25 examples are extant in Occitan and around 160 in Old French.<sup>326</sup> A distinguishing feature of the genre is its focus on class differences. Gender opposition is matched by class opposition between the courtly knight and the lowly

---

<sup>326</sup> See Gaunt, Harvey and Paterson, Eds., *Marcabru: A Critical Edition*, pp. 1-5 and 375-87.

shepherdess.<sup>327</sup> The dialogue is unusual in that it presents the shepherdess as the wittier of the two voices, who, while she may be unable to best the knight physically usually comes out on top verbally, as Gravdal points out.<sup>328</sup> Scholars have read this genre as one which satirizes courtly lyric, which undermines the knight as an ideal courtly lover, and it is this undermining of the male character's dominance by a subversive feminine voice that I shall examine.<sup>329</sup>

My corpus consists of four lyrics (Marcabru's 'L'autrier jost'una sebissa', PC 293.30; Gui d'Ussel's, 'L'autrier cavalgava', PC 194.15; Richard de Semilly's, 'L'autrier tout seus chevauchie mon chemin', and the anonymous 'L'autre jour en un jardin'). I will ask what impact a move toward parody has on the feminine voice and its ability to articulate its desires; whether it is accurate to describe these feminine voices as simply the products of male fantasy; and whether there is an argument for their being read as articulating something other than a culturally assigned position. I follow two definitions of parody; first, Rose's definition, which describes parody as:

---

<sup>327</sup> Paden, in *The Medieval Pastourelle*, p. ix, defines the *pastourelle* as follows: 'The mode is pastoral, commonly realized in a country setting and in the description of the heroine as a shepherdess; the cast includes a young man and a young woman; the plot comprises a discovery and an attempted seduction; the rhetoric involves both narrative and dialogue; the point of view is that of the man'.

<sup>328</sup> 'The rhetoric of social class camouflages the question of gender and the issue of sexual violence, as we discover when we look more closely at the shepherdess character. In most of the pastourelles, Marion is no shepherdess at all: she is the courtly lady, dressed in a shepherdess costume. She does not speak, reason, or argue like a peasant, but is as quick and witty as the knight, with whom she can pun and debate'. Gravdal, 'Camouflaging Rape: The Rhetoric of Sexual Violence in the Medieval Pastourelle', p. 371.

<sup>329</sup> Jackson argues that 'The earliest extant example, the poem of Marcabru "L'autrier, jost'una sebissa" is very obviously satirical in general conception and in detail. It is typical of the author that he should be one of the first of the Provençal poets to use the pastourelle as satire. The method he established was copied extensively by his successors. It consisted in making the knight talk to the peasant girl in the same words that he might have been expected to use to a lady of noble birth and to receive replies which are based on hard common sense, a full realization of the difference in rank between knight and peasant and the fact that these differences made any advantage for the girl out of the question'. 'The Medieval Pastourelle as a Satirical Genre', p. 165.

First imitating and then changing either, and sometimes both, the 'form' and 'content', or style and subject-matter, or syntax and meaning of another work, or, most simply, its vocabulary. In addition to, and at the same time as the preceding, most successful parodies may be said to produce from the comic incongruity between the original and its parody some comic, amusing, or humorous effect, which, together with the changes made by the parodist to the original by the rewriting of the old text, or juxtaposition of it with the new text in which it is embedded, may act as 'signals' of the parodic nature of the parody work for its reader.<sup>330</sup>

In this case, the 'old text' can be read as the courtly canon's presentation of the courtly lady and the debate lyrics. Secondly, Dentith's broader definition, which states that parody is:

One of the many forms of intertextual allusion of which texts are produced...many parodies draw on the authority of precursor texts to attack, satirise, or just playfully to refer to elements of the contemporary world.<sup>331</sup>

The two Occitan *pastorelas*, 'L'autrier jost'una sebissa' and 'L'autrier cavalgava' were written in the mid and late twelfth century respectively, and differ in their approach to dialogue. 'L'autrier jost'una sebissa' is the first known example of a *pastourelle*, parodying, in Rose's terms, courtly conventions.<sup>332</sup> The verbal dexterity seen in *tensos* or *jeux-partis*, and the behaviour amorous knights in some romances, is undermined for the first time by Marcabru. His *pastorela* contains a

---

<sup>330</sup> Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*, p. 45.

<sup>331</sup> Dentith, *Parody*, pp. 6 and 9.

<sup>332</sup> Edition and translation cited is Gaunt et al, *Marcabru: A Critical Edition*.



knight whose clumsy verbal sallies are easily laughed off by a clever, articulate shepherdess who does not allow him to get anywhere near physical contact – she is a ‘clear-sighted shepherdess...the noble, courtly knight is fundamentally lacking in *cortesia*; he is masking his decidedly base intentions with the language and forms of *fin’amors*’.<sup>333</sup> Dialogue and dialectic dominate the lyric; the shepherdess’ mother and the shepherdess, for example, are described in overtly dialectical terms – as a courtly peasant (33, 46, ‘corteza vilaina’). The knight tries to blur the class divide which separates him from the shepherdess, describing her father as a knight (31, ‘cavalers fo vostre paire’) and her mother as a peasant. There are layers of dialectic here, with the knight and shepherdess’s class and actions placing them in opposition. Dialectic informs the dialogue, too, with the shepherdess rebutting every point the knight makes. She emphasizes her bucolic origins:

‘Don, tot mo ling e mon aire

Vei revertir e retraire

Al vezoig et a l’araire’ (37-39)

‘My lord, I can see all my lineage and family going back and returning to the sickle and plough.’

The pattern emerging is of a knight whose overtures form an unbroken sequence, which take no account of the shepherdess’s resistance or responses, and a shepherdess who picks up on the points made and turns them around. The shepherdess is active, discerning, and engaged in the debate, while the knight sticks to a simpler, repetitive line. He abandons any pretence of courtliness and

---

<sup>333</sup> Harvey, ‘The Satirical Use of the Courtly Expression ‘*si dons*’ in the Works of the Troubadour Marcabru’, p. 32.

invites her to get underneath him (49, 'mi sopra e vos sotraina'). There is irony in the supposedly courtly knight who is capable only of repetitive, thoughtless speech and the supposedly lower-class shepherdess who runs verbal rings around him.

This focus on sense versus folly informs the dialectic the characters have established, and emphasizes her brains and his stupidity. She picks up on his vocabulary (24, 'pareillairia'), and teases him with her reference to companionship slipping from one's grasp, since that is exactly the scenario being played out here – only the knight is the one convinced he will easily win the shepherdess. The only thing out of place in her world is her interlocutor: Fantazzi points out the 'sharp facing off of two unequal partners', with the shepherdess gaining and keeping the linguistic upper hand.<sup>334</sup> The knight's rhetorical deficiencies are revealed as he continues to assign her roles she resists:

'Bella,' fiz m'ieu, 'douc'e pia,  
Destortz me soi de la via  
Per far ab vos compagnia,  
C'anc aitals toza vilaina  
Non dec ses pareil-paria  
Gardar aianta bestia  
En aital terra soldaina.' (15-21)

'My sweet, dear pretty one,' said I, 'I turned off the road to keep you company, for such a peasant wench as you ought never to have been looking after so many beasts, without a suitable companion in such an isolated place as this'.

---

<sup>334</sup> Fantazzi, 'Marcabru's *Pastourelle*: Courtly Love Decoded', p. 389.

The repetition is obvious. He persists in categorizing her according to class, focusing on her breeding, and in each intervention tells her how she is feeling and what she should be doing. Her response reiterates her place as part of nature's whole, a sense of belonging which will not be shaken by the knight's overtures:

'Ben conosc sen o folia.

La vostre pareillaria,

Segner,' so.m diz la vilaina,

'lai on s'estai, si s'estia,

Car tals la cuid'en bailia

Tener, no.n a mas l'ufaina.' (23-28)

'I know wisdom or folly when I see it. Let your "companionhood", sir,' thus said the peasant woman to me, 'remain where it is fitting, for she who thinks she is the mistress of it has nothing more than the vain illusion of it.'

She roundly mocks him, telling him to 'gape, fool, gape' (55, 'bada, fols, bada'), while the knight states that he can offer her financial rewards (60-61, 'd'aital tozeta vilaina / pot hom far ric companjatge'). Again, the shepherdess sets out her position as part of nature, within a milieu she finds comfortable, refusing to accept the position the knight has assigned her:

'Mais ieu per un pauc d'intratge

Non voil jes mon pieuzelatge

Chamjar per nom de putana.' (68-70)

But I, for a small entrance fee, do not wish to exchange my maidenhood for the title of whore.

The shepherdess's final stanza refutes the suggestion that they are alike; it is a manifesto for separation and class-appropriate living, albeit she has transcended her class status through rhetorical skill:

'Don, hoc, mas segon drechura

Encalz fols sa folatura,

Cortes cortez'aventura

E.l vilas ab sa vilaina'

(78-81)

'Yes my lord, but according to what is right, let the fool pursue his folly, the courtly man his courtly adventure, and the peasant [his adventure] with his peasant woman.'

The shepherdess evades the knight by establishing her wish to be a shepherdess, rather than any other position in the courtly hierarchy. She uses dialectic, acknowledging and challenging the knight's terminology at every stage, insisting on her position as a feminine type with which she is comfortable. The gap between her espousal of peasantry and her way with words only serves to undermine further the knight's inability to conduct a meaningful exchange, or to be, as he wishes to be, on the same level as her. Her straightforward approach to class and her place within nature and the social and courtly structure gives her more courtliness than the knight could ever have. The gap between them is too great to overcome, and every time the shepherdess speaks she widens it. This shepherdess parodies the courtly construct of what it is to be a woman, putting on the qualities assigned to Lady and woman as and when they are required. As Butler argues in *Gender Trouble*, 'if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and

inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity'.<sup>335</sup> These feminine voices submit to an already-defined framework, which they can exploit and subvert – just as, in Butler's theory, drag allows a performance which 'creates a unified picture of "woman"...it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence'.<sup>336</sup> The concept of gender as drag, which allows its performers – in this case, the shepherdesses – to resist binary positions through recognition of their performative elements, is a useful way to read the way these texts play with the concept of the feminine voice.

Gui d'Ussel's 'L'autrier cavalgava' (dated to 1195-6),<sup>337</sup> contrasts with the Marcabrunian approach to class difference and appropriate love. Instead of the dialogue pushing the interlocutors apart, 'L'autrier cavalgava' features a knight and a shepherdess whose conversation brings them together: this dialogue is another parody, but one which features an incongruously enthusiastic shepherdess. Each poetic voice confesses that they have been abandoned by the ones they love, and they find comfort in each other. Is the obliging shepherdess articulating her own desires, or is she a masculine projection, a poetic voice who says exactly what men want to hear? The knight notices a shepherdess who sings to herself:

'Lassa! Mal viu qui pert son jauzimen!' (9)

'Alas! It's a bad life if you lose your joy!'

---

<sup>335</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 186.

<sup>336</sup> Butler, p. 187.

<sup>337</sup> Edition and translation cited: Paden, ed., *The Medieval Pastourelle*, p. 62.

This introduction – not designed to be heard – sets the scene for a knight who will comfort her and replace her loss, which is of course exactly what happens. The knight enquires about her song:

‘Toza de bon aire

...Prec que.m diatz ver

Si.us ven a plazer

Quinha cansos era

Selha que dizĩatz era

(19; 21-24)

“Girl of good family...I beg you to tell me truly, if you please, what song that was, that you were singing just now.’

The knight’s response establishes his view of the shepherdess as being, despite her rustic background, of good breeding, and pushes the dialogue toward discussion of her lost love. The shepherdess is not just a good singer, but also greets the knight appropriately (‘et ylh levet se’, 12, and she rose): both parties act according to the rules of courtliness and their respective social statuses. The shepherdess bemoans the loss of her lover:

‘Senher, non a guaire

Qu’ieu soli’aver

A tot mon voler

Tal que.m fai doler

Quar non l’ai enquera,

Mas elh m’oblid’e s’esfera

Per outra de mi’

(28-34)

“Sir, until very recently I used to have just as I wanted a man who makes me sad because I have him no longer, but he forgets me and goes wild over another girl.”

The release which speech brings is echoed by the knight, who admits that the same thing has happened to him:

‘Toza, ses fallensa,  
Vos dic atrasag  
Que atretal plag  
Quon a vos a fag  
Aquelh que.us oblida  
M’a fag una descauzida  
Qu’ieu amava fort. (37-43)

‘Girl, no lie, I tell you likewise that the same thing that he who forgets you has done to you was done to me by a faithless woman whom I greatly loved.’

Each lover has been betrayed in the same way (39, ‘atretal plag’), giving them an equality which emphasises their delight at finding a lover who understands their plight. The short lines and strong rhyme sounds emphasize the grief of each poetic voice, with the knight picking up the shepherdess’s vocabulary (‘oblida’, 33, 41, 44); each intervention in the dialogue moves the plot forward. The mutual confession prompts the shepherdess to volunteer as a replacement:

'Senher, mantenensa  
Trobatz del forfag  
Que.us a fag tan lag  
La fals'ab cor frag;  
E ve.us m'en aizida  
Que.us am a tota ma vida  
Si.m n'es en acort,  
E tornem lo desconort  
C'avem avut en joy et en deport.' (46-54)

'Sir, you have found compensation for the wrong that she did you so meanly, that false woman with her wicked heart; and here I am, ready to love you all my life if you agree, and let's turn the unhappiness we've had into joy and pleasure.'

The formal structure of the poem (*coblas doblas*), whereby the rhyme scheme of the stanzas goes in pairs, so that two successive stanzas have the same rhyme sounds, adds to the speed with which events move. The shepherdess' response links her rhyme-words back to the previous stanza in which the knight confessed he has been abandoned, giving this pair of stanzas a sense of direct consequence and speed emphasised by the short line lengths. The shepherdess's proposal is picked up with alacrity by the knight, whose *tornada* picks up her use of 'acort' (52, 57) and 'joy' (54, 59). The final lines of the lyric are the shepherdess's, who says that the knight has removed her bad feelings ('vostr'amors tan fort...tan gen m'avetz tot mo mal talan mort', 62; 64, your love so strong...so gently have you slain all my resentment; *translation modified*).



So how does this shepherdess articulate her desire? I suggest that she occupies a culturally assigned position (the lower-class woman of easy virtue who is happy to fall in with a friendly knight) but that resistance can be located in the emphasis on emotion – she performs as a woman, but speaks as a Lady. Unlike many *pastorelas*, this lyric does not end in physical consummation of the new relationship; on the contrary, each poetic voice behaves with physical decorum throughout, focusing on emotions and articulating a traditionally ‘courtly’ approach to love. What is unusual is the speed at which the budding romance is explored and agreed, and this relies on verbal dexterity as each speaker picks up on, and redeploys, each other’s content and form. It is this speed and accuracy which suggests a feminine voice fully engaged in the courtly process, able to use the formal structure to her own ends whilst remaining in the courtly system. Her wit gains her a superior lover, trading in her unfaithful ex for a courtly knight who is, unusually, able to use language to woo her.

This welcome for a man able to answer feminine needs is also seen in Richard de Semilly’s ‘L’autrier tout seus chevauchie mon chemin’. This Old French lyric (dating to c. 1200)<sup>338</sup> plays on another courtly stereotype, that of the *mal mariée*. This lady is married to an older husband, and feels that taking a lover is justified. The lyric has a refrain at the end of each stanza which punctuates the text, echoing the feminine voice’s words. It runs:

Dame qui a mal mari  
S’el fet ami,  
N’en fet pas a blasmer

---

<sup>338</sup> Version and translation cited is Paden, ed., *The Medieval Pastourelle*, p. 82.

If a lady who has a bad husband takes a lover, she doesn't deserve to be blamed.

The refrain is sung at times by the feminine voice and at times by the masculine voice, as the emphasis shifts from stanza to stanza: in stanzas one and two it's an invitation to the lover; in stanza three a rebuke to her family, who married her unfairly; in stanza four, it's justification of her affair and a means of sealing their agreement; and by the final stanza the refrain has a touch of irony, working as a comment on the 'game of love' the knight has given the lady. Just as in 'L'autrier cavalgava', the knight overhears a woman singing the refrain. He asks:

"...Suer, dites moi,

Pour quoi parlez vous d'ami? Est ce desroi? (8-9)

'Sister, tell me, why do you speak of a lover? Is this folly?'

The lady replies that she does not wish to hide anything, and quotes her refrain. She tells him that her family gave her to a miserly peasant who doesn't let her 'play':

'A un vilain m'ont donee mi parent

Que ne fet fors aüner or et argent

Et me fet d'ennui morir assez souvent,

Qu'il ne me let joer.' (15-18)

'My family gave me to a peasant, who does nothing but pile up gold and silver, and often makes me die of boredom, since he doesn't let me play.'

The sexual undertones in 'play' are clear; the lady has also revealed this lyric's twist. Not only is it set in Paris, differentiating it from the overtly bucolic Occitan lyrics, but the class oppositions are reversed, with a married lady trapped by an uncourtly man, a take on the *mal mariée* trope. Again, in an inversion of a common Occitan theme, money emerges as a preoccupation of the husband, not something she is offered by the knight. The knight's response supports her view that she deserves a lover:

Je li dis, "Ma douce suer, se Dex me saut,

Vez ci vostre douz amis qui ne vos faut.

Venez vous en avec moi et ne vous chaut;

Si le lessiez ester. [refrain] (22-25)

I said, 'My sweet sister, God save me, here is the sweet lover you do not lack. Come with me and don't be concerned; just let him be.'

The knight is the lady's fantasy man, appearing out of nowhere to assuage her need and her guilt, inverting the more common theme of a shepherdess who acts as a conduit for masculine fantasy. The lady bluntly lays out her thoughts:

"Sire, je n'iroie pas hors de Paris,

J'auroie perdu heneur més a touz dis;

Més ici l'acoupirai se trouver puis

Nul qui me vueille amer." (29-32)

'Sir, I wouldn't go outside of Paris, I would lose honour forevermore; but I'll cuckold him here, if I can find anyone to love me.'<sup>339</sup>

This address is answered by the knight's reported speech in the final stanza – he obliges her by taking part in the game of love (37, 'Je li fis le gieu d'amors'), and she asks him to return to her (38-39, 'Puis me pria et requist qu'au revenir / alasse a li parler'). The lady's dialogue illustrates two feminine types: unhappily-married wife and eager lover. The urban setting and the circularity of the refrain differentiate this lyric from the Occitan lyrics examined above, and they certainly shift the feminine voice away from a reactive role toward a more positive stance via the articulation of desire which is then answered by a masculine intervention.

This proactive femininity is taken one step further in 'L'autre jour en un jardin', an anonymous early thirteenth-century Old French *pastourelle*.<sup>340</sup> It features a lady whose enthusiasm for love terrifies her reluctant lover, who does everything he can to evade her advances. The humour of the situation, which inverts the typical knightly advances and feminine resistance, moves the text further toward parody. It raises questions about how stereotypical feminine types undermine the feminine voice, and forces one to consider how a feminine voice can parody the courtly system without moving to a position which undermines the presentation of that gender. The lyric begins typically, with the masculine voice telling how he noticed a young girl sitting a little outside an orchard (3-4, 'un poi defors un vergier / trouvai

---

<sup>339</sup> The contradiction of someone happy to cuckold their husband on his own property, in his garden, rather than leave Paris has been addressed by Paden, who suggests that the fields were associated with prostitution 'She is eager to cuckold him with the narrator in her garden near the gate of Paris, but she refuses to go outside the city...Clearly this *dame* does not believe that her honor would be stained by infidelity, but she refuses to be seen in a traditional setting of love for sale'. Paden, 'Rape in the Pastourelle', p. 338.

<sup>340</sup> Version and translation cited is Paden, ed., *The Medieval Pastourelle*, p. 119.

tousete seant'). However, this idyllic opening is, in the opening stanza, completely undermined when we are told that he was very afraid of her:

S'oi si grant paour de li  
Que je m'en fouï (8-9)

And I was so afraid of her that I fled!

His departure prompts the girl to chase him; the humour comes from the detail that she had to tuck up her shirt to do so:

Ele print a se courcier  
Son chainse par dedevant  
Si me prist a enchaucier  
Et adés m'aloit huchant  
Et criant (10-14)

She tucked up her shirt in front and started to chase me, and kept on shouting and yelling.

She calls him cowardly and heartless (16, 'couars cuers failli') and begs him to turn back (17, 'retornez vous devers mi'). That physical love on her mind is clear from his reply:

"Bele suer, d'ice mestier  
Dont vous m'alez requerant  
Et proiant,  
Je n'en sai ne tant ne quant" (21-24)

'Pretty sister, of that business that you're asking for and begging, I don't know the least little thing.'

As if this wasn't clear enough, he tells her to find another lover (27, 'Fetes autre ami'), adding to the humour through the imperative form, ignored by the girl. The masculine voice's flight, and his delicacy in refusing to name 'that business' unless it's via polite euphemism gives the lyric a farcical air. The role reversal continues with the girl's reply:

"Couart, ne vous a mestier,"

Dist la touse en souriant." (28-29)

'Coward, it will do you no good,' the girl said with a smile.

The feminine voice is in control, while the masculine voice gets more anxious as he tries to avoid the inevitable. He is caught by the girl – who can clearly run faster than him, another humorous touch – and falls down, with her landing on top of him:

Au tiers me sesi,

Més d'itant me mescheï

Que souz lui cheï (34-36)

On the third she grabbed me, and I had such back luck that I fell beneath her.

The feminine voice embodies all the elements one might expect from a predatory man – aggressive speech, physical agility, and determination to overcome any resistance. The lyric ends with the masculine voice telling us that she had her wicked way with him:

De moi fist tout son talent

Et me descouvri

Et me foula et ledi

Plus que je ne di. (42-45)

She had her way with me, and laid me bare, and crushed and abused me more than I can say.

What is noteworthy about this lyric is that the parody operates in relatively broad terms. The feminine voice plays on masculine conventions, with its aggressive sexuality and physical slapstick; however, the role reversal does not extend to the dialogue. This dialogue is based on sweeping generalizations and broad humour. The masculine voice has fewer lines than the feminine voice, and there is a notable lack of the intricate, often witty dialogue we have seen in other *pastorelas* and *pastourelles*. This dialogue doesn't have the formal flair one would expect, and has been reduced to simple exchanges played for laughs, making the whole lyric less dialogized than some others. This feminine voice has been pushed so far into parody that it can only be categorized as farcical. The articulation of desire moves into parody the moment it moves toward words or actions which are beyond the realm of possibility, and the image of a girl chasing a reluctant man across a garden is humorous precisely because it inverts masculine behaviour, and therefore masculine extra-textual audience expectations, and because it would have been seen as beyond the realms of possibility for a 'real' woman. A feminine voice which parodies feminine values and behaviours tells us about the medieval conception of femininity – which can be defined as everything this feminine voice is not. Parody

acts as a space in which the parameters of femininity can be explored, with the humour coming from improbable words and actions.

Not only do the *pastourelles* parody the formal constraints of the lyric, but they also play on class difference. I suggest that the shepherdesses move away from their position as lower-class peasants to a hybrid position where they combine class opposition, which is clearly binary in its form, with the verbal dexterity of the cleric. They use humour to soften the impact of this move toward equal terms with (or verbal superiority over) their masculine interlocutor: parody enables greater movement than would be possible in the lyric poems or narrative texts.

The final section considers texts which push parody even further, and whose entertainment value lies in their ability to push courtly conventions to extremes, often involving grotesque situations which are on occasion anatomically impossible. The role of the feminine voice in these *fabliaux* is, I will argue, a largely humorous one, which is amusing thanks to the tension between its connection and disconnection from reality: these feminine characters find themselves in circumstances ranging from the everyday to the fantastic, but generic expectations allow these voices to articulate what they want, free from formal or social constraints. If the reader can get past the extremes of the situations in which the feminine characters find themselves, they will see characters able to use language with precision and humour, besting their masculine counterparts in the battle of wits which is at the heart of these comic tales.



#### Section Four: *Fabliaux*

The *fabliaux* are short rhymed texts written in Old French between about 1200 and 1350, some of which use scatological humour and obscene imagery to comic effect.<sup>341</sup> They ‘generally tell of conflicts between rivals’ and their plots borrow from other genres including ‘fables, folktales, Milesian tales, Latin comedy and, apparently, from obscene jokes and local gossip.’<sup>342</sup> Of the two examples I look at, one parodies *jeux-partis*; one parodies chivalric romance. Their focus on sex, tricks, and their consequences has been noted by critics; Dronke argues that ‘the paths of transmission of these stories remain obscure’, while Nykrog has argued that the *fabliaux* are a part of courtly literature, ‘lus et goûtés dans les milieux courtois...ils sont si profondément pénétrés de la façon de penser de ces milieux que pour les bien comprendre il faut les considérer comme une sorte de genre courtois’, a position with which I would broadly concur.<sup>343</sup>

*Le Jugement des Cons* and *Berengier au Lonc Cul* (dated to the early thirteenth century) feature dialogue which includes a feminine voice.<sup>344</sup> These feminine characters play an explicitly bawdy role, putting them in a parodic position; the humour comes from an inversion of traditional roles (as in *Berengier*) or their extreme innocence (as in *Le Jugement*). I ask whether the fact that the texts privilege humour through parody and reduce women to stereotyped body parts

---

<sup>341</sup> The *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux* (NCRF) contains 127 *fabliaux*; Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux: Etude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médiévale* contains 160. The term *fabliau* was first used ‘in an unquestionable way’, according to Nykrog, in the writings of Jean Bodel (c. 1170 – 1210); ‘Courtliness and the Townspeople’, pp. 61-62.

<sup>342</sup> White, ‘Sexual Language and Human Conflict in Old French Fabliaux’, pp. 185 and 189.

<sup>343</sup> Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux*, p. 18; Dronke, ‘The Rise of the Medieval Fabliau’, p. 278.

<sup>344</sup> The version cited is Noomen and Boogaard, Eds., *NRCF*, translation my own; see p. 25 and pp. 248-49.

condemns these feminine voices to the realm of mouthpieces for misogynist views of women, or whether the extremity of the texts allows the feminine voice space to appropriate masculine discourse and use it to resist the binary of good versus bad stereotyping.<sup>345</sup>

Scholars such as Johnson have suggested that the *fabliaux* offer a home for 'winning women' who use their wits to come out on top: 'The *fablieors* do not consider women through the narrow lenses of antifeminism, and if women play a conspicuous role in these narratives it is rare for their performance to be simply condemned.'<sup>346</sup> Burns, too, suggests that the feminine voices are placed in opposition to the focus on bodies: 'As we see women in these tales reduced to headless, silenced bodies, talking vaginas, and ungendered asses, we also hear within those same texts women's voices that resist such pat formulations'.<sup>347</sup> I will demonstrate that 'winning women' who resist reductionist stereotyping are at the heart of dialogue within *Le Jugement des Cons* and *Berengier au Lonc Cul*.

*Le Jugement* is the story of a man with three daughters. All three love a poor man called Robin who has promised to marry each of them. They discover this when talking to each other, and go to their father for a solution. On his way back from mass, the father encounters his brother and requests his help. Each girl puts her case to her uncle, who promises them that whoever wins from the judgment he will give will benefit from his wealth. Gathering a panel of three neighbours, he asks each niece which is older, her or her cunt. The winner will be the one with the best answer.

---

<sup>345</sup> See Lacy, 'Fabliau Women', which discusses misogyny in the *fabliaux*.

<sup>346</sup> Johnson, 'Women on Top: Antifeminism in the Fabliaux?', p. 298.

<sup>347</sup> Burns, *Bodytalk*, p. 29.

The text opens with the narrator carefully telling his audience that the father is ambitious ('dout mout desirroit / Qu'eles venissent a honor', 4-5, he was very keen that they be honoured), but that he is not rich. This financial need lends desperation to the actions of the girls. What should be a simple tale of the love between a girl and her future husband quickly moves into a commentary on the stupidity and ambition of three girls and the need for men to manage them. The opening dialogue between the three sisters sets out the dilemma:

L'autre respont : 'Qui est il dont?

- C'est Robinés Doutrelepont.

- Lasse, dist ele, mar fui nee,

Quant ma suer est ainsi dervee

Qu'ele aime celui qui m'amoit!

- La male passions te loit,

Dist la maisnee, il aime moi! (19-25)

The other answers, 'Who is he then?'

- 'It's Robin Doutrelepont.'

- 'Alas,' she said, 'That I was ever born, when my sister is so out of line that she loves he who would love me!'

- 'Wrong-headed feelings have overcome you,' said the youngest, 'He loves me!.'

The sisters cannot distinguish between their feelings for Robin, or his for them – they all use exactly the same formula to describe their love him and his for them. Their unresolved dialogue is repeated in front of their father. The façade of

courtliness (32, 'Et si li dist cortoisement') evaporates as they try to prove the strength of their respective loves:

'Tu as grant tort,  
Voire, ançois me doinst Dieus la mort!  
Fet cele qu'après li fu nee,  
De celui sui trois tans amee  
De qui ele se vante et prise!  
- Dont serai je arriere mise?

Dist la maisnee (39-45)

'You are completely wrong, truly, or may God strike me dead!', said she who was born after her, 'I am loved three times more by him who she boasts and talks of!'

- 'Will I be left behind?', said the youngest.

The father's reaction is that no clerk or priest will allow Robin to have all three, and that he will advise them how to resolve this. Encountering his twin brother, he tells him the problem and notes that the daughters are caught in a 'grant tençon' (70, A great dilemma or debate). Choosing between two – or, in this case, three – impossible choices is at the heart of the *tenso* or *tençon*, and the characters must negotiate this seemingly unresolvable feminine dilemma. The arrival of their uncle prompts the third account of the problem, but this time the focus has shifted away from love to possession:

L'autre ne se volt plus celer,  
Ainz dist : 'Tu mens, voir, je l'avrai' (92-93)

The other sister doesn't want to keep quiet any longer, and so says: 'You're lying, truly, I shall have him.'

At this, the sisters start brawling. We have come a long way from courtliness, and the focus on material things is echoed by the uncle's promise of financial reward (104-5) as well as the man himself to the lucky winner of the competition. The dialogue halts the moment this reward is mentioned, and they reply in unison that they agree the terms of the competition (109, 'Celes dient communement'). The final section of the text is the competition itself, and instead of the classical triangle of Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena being judged by Paris, we have three sisters who haven't demonstrated any breadth to their thinking, judged by a man who has assembled a handful of (male) neighbours to assist him, an audience who, one suspects, will enjoy the spectacle of three girls talking about their nether regions.

The uncle asks each girl the same question ('Qui est ainsnez, vous ou voz cons?', 119, 130-31, 142-43). The eldest answers that her cunt is older:

Mes cons si est, en bone foi,

Si m'aït Dieus, ainsnez de moi:

Il a barbe, je n'en ai point. (121-23)

My cunt is, in good faith so help me God, older than me: it has a beard, but I don't have one at all.

The middle one responds:

...De grant piece

Sui je ainsnee que mes cons,

Que j'ai les denz et granz et lons,

Et mes cons n'en a encor nus. (132-35)

I am significantly older than my cunt, since I have big and long teeth, but my cunt doesn't have any, it's still bare of them.

The youngest says:

Mes cons est plus jones de moi;

Si vous dirai reson por qoi:

De la mamele sui sevrete,

Mes cons a la goule baee:

Jeüns est, si veult aletier. (147-51)

My cunt is younger than me, and I will tell you why: I have been weaned from the breast, but my cunt has a hungry mouth: it's young, and wants to suckle.

The three responses have a logic of their own – as Gaunt highlights, they offer 'three competing models of femininity' but the youngest is the only one who contrasts the masculine 'con' with the feminine 'mamele', giving a feminine twist to the masculine label she's been assigned.<sup>348</sup> She supplements her answer with the vocabulary of forensic and scholastic debate and dialectic, using 'reson' (148) but also, at the end of her answer, arguing that she has found the correct answer which should be judged properly:

---

<sup>348</sup> Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p. 241.

Or m'ose je bien afichier

Que j'ai bone reson trovee.

L'ame de lui soit honoree

Qui jugera ces moz a droit! (152-55)

So I dare to suggest that I have found the right argument. May the soul of he who judges these words to be right be honoured!

The uncle immediately hands to her 'celui qui lonc tens l'a amee' (161, he who has loved her for a long time). The contrast between courtliness and brawling, and between the power of masculine and feminine speech is marked. The extra-textual audience sees the arrival of the uncle and his neighbours as the point where a man will disentangle the repetition and tunnel-vision of the feminine voices in a quasi-legal procedure which echoes the forensic vocabulary often used in the debate lyrics.<sup>349</sup> The question asked – which exposes the sisters to ridicule and reduces them to one body part only for the titillation of a masculine audience, within and outside the text – should continue this attitude to speech. Indeed, the responses of the first two sisters fit neatly into the pattern. It is only the third answer which is out of kilter: the youngest sister uses legal language to her own advantage, and forces the judges into a corner. If they don't recognize the 'droit' of her speech, they will look as though they don't know what they are doing. This flash of space for the feminine voice is a moment of independence in which she uses the courtly system to her own ends, gaining Robin by playing her masculine interlocutors at their own game. It seems the broader parameters of parody do give the feminine voice an

---

<sup>349</sup> Akehurst has estimated that just under 40% of the fabliaux in the *NRCF* include legal vocabulary or procedures ('Customary Law in the Old French Fabliau', pp. 42-43).

opportunity to push the rules, to place themselves in an advantageous position precisely because parody gives them for scope for manoeuvre.

This is certainly the case in my final text, *Berengier au Lonc Cul*. The text tells of the son of a usurer, who was given as a wife the daughter of a rich castellan who owed the usurer money. The usurer turned knight loved doing nothing, interspersed with good food; his wife realises that he is neither a good knight nor of good breeding, and when she lets this slip he boasts that he will destroy his enemies as a means of improving his status in the eyes of his wife. He goes to the woods and batters his shield, coming home exhausted and war-torn. His wife realises something isn't right when she notices that a trip 'to fight' ends with him looking suspiciously fresh. One day she follows him, dressed as a knight. When she spies him fighting his shield, which is hanging on a tree, she rushes up and tells him off for damaging her wood. His plea for clemency results in a choice: either he loses his head, or he agrees to kiss her behind. He opts for the latter, and once he's done the deed asks the unknown knight's name. Told that it is 'Berengier of the long arse' he trudges home, only to find his wife has got there before him, and is ensconced in their bedroom with a lover. When he complains, she tells him to keep quiet, and quotes the name 'Berengier au lonc cul' at him, revealing her trick.

The text begins as a morality tale concerned with class; as Gravdal highlights, 'parody became the space in which the literary preoccupation with social hierarchy can be used as comic material', and 'the question of crossing class boundaries is



addressed directly'.<sup>350</sup> This preoccupation is layered onto gender opposition, with the behaviour of all the men in the *fabliau* marked as selfish and immoral:

Si doivent grant honte avoir

Et grant damage, si ont il:

Li chevalier mauvais et vil

Et coart issent de tel gent

Qui miauz aiment or et argent

Que il ne font chevalerie. (28-33)

They should have great shame, and great pain, and thus they do: bad, cowardly and vile knights issue from such people who love gold and silver more than they do chivalry.

Lazy peasants and marriage between classes are resolved through dialogue, as 'punitive reprisal is levied against the powerful, as the subservient best them with jubilant, carnivalesque satisfaction'.<sup>351</sup> Part of the humour comes from the *vilain* – *chevalier* contrast, with the husband 'completely lacking in those noble qualities expected of the *chevalier*, thus his violation of the code of knightly idealism is all the more blatantly comic'.<sup>352</sup> The dialectic between good and bad chivalry, between chivalric and clerical modes of conduct, between femininity and masculinity, and between their respective families is maintained throughout and highlighted through dialogue; some scholars suggesting that the text parodies the romance and the

---

<sup>350</sup> Gravdal, *Vilain and Courtois*, pp. 3 and 43, and Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux*, p. 123.

<sup>351</sup> Jost, 'The Non-Conformist Genre and Its Transgressions', p. 123.

<sup>352</sup> Honeycutt, 'The Knight and his World', p. 90.

*pastourelle* form.<sup>353</sup> Busby suggests that this parody starts with the marriage of the *vilain* to the heroine, which echoes the marriage of Chrétien de Troyes' Erec and Enide: 'cette démarche née du désespoir, n'est-elle pas précisément celle à laquelle le père d'Enide sait si longtemps résister?'.<sup>354</sup> Despite the emphasis on the poor behaviour of the men in this *fabliau*, as Bloch points out the model of femininity is not without reproach: 'This is a *fabliau* whose moral intent by all reckoning is the denunciation of liars...And yet, the very vehicle of didactic intention it itself a lie, the savvy wife draped in the ill-fitting cloak – the armor – of a knight'.<sup>355</sup> If the wife's character is flawed, the husband is a caricature - not just a bad knight, but the worst knight ever ('Que pires de lui ne fu mais / Por armes prendre ne baillier', 50-51, That worse than him was never made to carry arms or fight). His behaviour proves his lack of lineage, and the wife's first words reference her own superior lineage:

'A sejourner ne pris je rien.' (61)

I don't set much store by doing nothing.

This prompts boasting from her husband, who states that he has far more prowess than any relative of hers:

---

<sup>353</sup> Brown argues that 'While the MS D version of "Berenger" owes much of its humor to parodies of epic poetry and romance, the structural model of the *pastourelle* supplies the impetus for the inversions of gender, social rank, and the sexual encounter present in this version'. "'Berenger au long cul" and the *pastourelle*', p. 323; Percy argues that the name Bérenger itself 'is a conflation of a name associated with one of the *douze pairs* and numerous other heroes of the chivalric epic with an epithet burlesquely analagous to that of the popular hero of an extensive chivalric-epic cycle, Guillaume au cort nez'. 'An Instance of Heroic Parody in the *Fabliaux*', p. 105.

<sup>354</sup> Busby, 'Fabliau et Roman Breton', p. 125.

<sup>355</sup> Bloch, *The Scandal of the Fabliaux*, pp. 104-5.

'Dame,' dist il, j'é tel renon,  
N'avez nul si hardi parant  
Que je n'aie plus hardemant  
Et plus valor et plus proece. (64-67)

'Lady,' he said, 'I have such renown that no matter how fearless your relatives, I have more courage and more valour and more prowess.'

The next day sees his expedition to the woods, a parody of Erec's reaction to Enide's news that he is 'recreanz', the humour coming from the domesticity of his efforts, which don't compare to Erec's quest to prove his identity as a knight.<sup>356</sup> Returning home with battered arms (110, 'De sa lance tint un troçon') his appearance and his language are at one:

'Traiez vos tost, fait il, arriere!  
Que sachiez bien: n'est mie droiz  
Qu'a si bon chevalier tochoiz  
Con je sui (118-21)

'Get back now!' he said. 'Know well: it is not right that you touch such a good knight as I am.'

The wife is so shocked she does not know what to say (130, 'Ne set que dire ne que croire'), but this gap in the dialogue is resolved when she notices that he comes back from fighting with battered shield but intact armour (144, 'Mais il n'ert cassez ne bleciez'). His words don't match his appearance: dialogue reveals the truth. Insisting he does not need any armed men as back-up he departs for the woods

---

<sup>356</sup> *Erec et Enide*, line 2462.

(‘Dame, je n’i manrai nelui’, 169, Lady, I won’t command any of them), so the wife dresses as a knight and follows him (‘Comme chevaliers s’est armee’, 175, She is armed like a knight).<sup>357</sup> Bloch’s argument that the *fabliaux* depend upon representation that is always awry is played upon here, with disguise – good and bad - and interpretation of signs and language at the heart of this text.<sup>358</sup> The wife’s words, on catching her husband hacking away at a tree, are direct and assume the superiority she has broadcast throughout the marriage:

‘Vassaus, vassaus, c’est grant folie  
Que vos mon bois si decopez!  
Mauvais sui se vos m’eschapez  
Que ne soiez mis en uns giez!  
Vostre escu por qoi peçoiez,  
Qui ne vos avoit rien mesfait? (194-99)

‘Vassal, vassal, it’s very foolish of you to damage my woods so! I’ll be damned if I let you escape me before you’re put in a jail! Why do you batter your shield, when it hasn’t done you any wrong?

---

<sup>357</sup> See Muscatine’s study of *fabliaux*, where he points out the their stress on clerical wit, combined here by the lady with the bravery of the knight: ‘Indeed, recent study of the *fabliaux* has tended more and more to stress their clerical connections...the more we appreciate the sophisticated and learned elements in their background and composition, the more we must impute to them an authorship involving clerks. Clerks are, interestingly, the only class of people uniformly admired in the *fabliaux*...’. *The Old French Fabliaux*, p. 10.

<sup>358</sup> ‘They [the *fabliaux*] insist incessantly that the coat of representation is to some degree always ill-fitting, always torn’. Bloch, ‘The *Fabliaux*, Fetishism, and Freud’s Jewish Jokes’, p. 8.

She supplies the correct answer herself:

Que vos estes coarz provez! (203)

Because you are a proven coward!

The wife uses dialogue to resolve her own questions about the truth. Echoing her reaction when she saw him fighting with his own shield ('Esbaïe est et esperdue', 190, She is shocked and bowled over) he is shocked by her words (206, 'Esboïz est et esperduz') and by a wife who has transformed herself into a knight. She is playing with appearance and language as he did – but more successfully. His offer of money and goods in exchange for mercy is refused by she whose experience of this type of exchange is not a good one ('A vostre gré mout volantiers / Vos donrai avoir et deniers', 213-14, I will very willingly, if you wish, give you goods and money).

The wife uses dialogue to force her husband into the position she favours, offering him a *jeu-parti*-like dilemma:

'Ainz que vos movoiz de cest leu,

Comment que vos jostoiz a moi;

...Ou je descendrai jus a pié,

Devant vos m'iré abaissier:

Vos me vandroiz o cu baissier' (218-19; 224-26)

'Either you move from here, and joust with me...Or I will dismount and stand up, and you will have to abase yourself before me: you will come here and kiss my arse.'

This dialogue, which may parody the challenges of Esclados in *Yvain*, prompts something nearer the truth.<sup>359</sup> The lady addresses her husband as ‘Vassaus’ (194), just as Esclados does Calogrenant in *Yvain* (489), and this comes after she has heard her husband making ‘grant noise...et grant tampeste!’ (187, great noise...and great storm), which echoes the ‘tel noise, tel fraint’ (479, great noise, great uproar) seen in *Yvain*. As Busby argues, ‘Les ressemblances entre ces deux passages sont trop fortes pour être le résultat du hasard...L’auteur du fabliau évoque ainsi un second épisode d’un roman de Chrétien, et comme pour l’épisode d’*Erec et Enide*, l’évocation est parodique’.<sup>360</sup>

Under pressure, the husband’s words move toward the truth (‘Sire, fait il, por Deu merci!...Vos donrai avoir et deniers’, 210; 214, Sire, he said, in God’s name have mercy...I will give you goods and money), and the wife’s gleeful ‘Tornez ça vostre face!’ (241, put your face here!) is likewise a comic moment and an honest reflection of her feelings toward her husband. This part of the ruse depends on his inability to navigate visual signs and misleading language, and it goes to plan, with the kiss followed by a request for the unknown knight’s identity:

‘Biaus sire, vostre non me dites

...J’é non Berangiers au lonc cul,

Qui a toz les coarz fait honte.

(253; 258-59)

‘Handsome sir, tell me your name’...’My name is Berengier au lonc cul, who shames all cowards.’

---

<sup>359</sup> See *Yvain*, lines 489-514.

<sup>360</sup> Busby, *Fabliau et Roman Breton*, p. 128.

The anomalous use of 'biaus' for someone who has hardly shown their face adds a humorous note to this humiliation. The dialogue includes the audience, with the wife, as those 'in the know'; those not in the know have included the husband ever since the wife correctly interpreted the discrepancy between his language and his appearance. She returns home, collecting her lover on the way – a knight who presumably displays the sort of chivalry she wants – and is happy to let her husband in on her ruse in their final dialogue. The husband accuses her of behaving badly:

'Voz me servez vilainement,

Qui home amenez ceianz' (276-77)

You serve me badly, when you bring a man home.

The wife's response silences him:

Or gardez que no dites mais:

Tantost de vos me clameroie (280-81)

Now be sure that you don't say anything more: or I shall quickly complain about you.

The wife specifies that she will complain to Berengier, who shamed the husband and recently had him in his power. Referring to Berengier as 'vostre chier compere' (286, your dear companion), she uses question and answer to clarify the situation, as well as coded speech, which this time her husband cannot fail to interpret correctly, accompanied as it is by the visual sign of her in bed with another man.

The text ends with the cheerful comment that the wife then did what she wanted:

Et cele fait sa volanté,

Qui ne fut sote ne vilaine (294-95)

And she did as she pleased, she who was neither stupid nor a peasant.

The tale turns on language, giving a feminine voice the opportunity to use dialogue to ameliorate her predicament. The wife interprets signs and uses language to direct the situation; the humour stems from the extreme nature of her ruse – dressing up as a knight – allied to her husband's inability to recognize what is quite literally staring him in the face. Good breeding gives the wife her nous, and its lack does for the husband, whose behaviour and language are not those of someone well-bred. He is unable to operate in a world where chivalry and clerical ability go hand in hand.

What place does parody in the *fabliaux* have, then, for the feminine voice? Its humour gives the feminine a unique space, where it can push at the boundaries of acceptability. The *fabliaux* favour dialogue, and this, combined with their focus on relations between the sexes, gives the feminine voice an unusual platform.<sup>361</sup> *Fabliaux* dialogue allows the feminine voice to balance the competing pressures of extreme action with language which places her in control, performing, in Butler's terms, as a woman in terms of her actions, combined with elements of masculine speech. The feminine voices use the stereotyping which reduces them to genitalia

---

<sup>361</sup> Cooke states that 'the typical fabliau consists of about 50 percent dialogue'. *The Old French and Chaucerian Fabliaux*, p. 51.



and speech about body parts to get them what they want. As Burns points out in relation to *Berengier au long cul*, 'her words and gestures reveal how his male-centered knowledge has overlooked the obvious'.<sup>362</sup> The conflict Burns identifies centres on a failure properly to interpret a combination of visual signs and language, with the feminine voice using dialogue to make her point. Dialogue and appearances are based on lies, or at least on a potential gap between signs and the truth. We also see this in the *Jugement*, where one supposedly uniform body part is revealed through dialogue to be decidedly individual. The *fabliaux* rely on humour, which is 'consistently based on an incongruity introduced into the work'.<sup>363</sup> The *Jugement* uses dialogue to exploit this incongruity, combining the ridiculous (three girls earnestly revealing the characteristics of their vaginas as a means of resolving a contest over a man which has descended into brawling) with the sublime, as the youngest girl uses rhetoric to best her sisters. As described by Burns, these feminine voices embody the trouble men have with women – 'both mouth and vagina work in tandem against men'.<sup>364</sup> Finally, though, the extra-textual audience is left laughing with the female characters rather than at them, amused by their verbal dexterity and their ability to manipulate their hapless men.

## Conclusion

Feminine voices, then, encompass a range of genres and scenarios, from lyric poetry to farce. Their reliance on dialogue as a mechanism to express themselves is striking, and seems to allow these voices to move beyond the melancholy so often seen in the *trobairitz*. Shapiro has described these latter as constrained by

---

<sup>362</sup> Burns, *Bodytalk*, p. 43.

<sup>363</sup> Lacy, 'Types of Esthetic Distances in the Fabliaux', p. 116.

<sup>364</sup> Burns, 'Knowing Women', p. 84.

their entry into a masculine linguistic system; 'the praise of the beloved becomes a pretext for the defense of the song's existence'.<sup>365</sup> This is not the feminine voice which emerges from dialogue. Dialogue offers a space in which the feminine voice can, to a certain extent, resist the pressure of the masculine courtly love ideology.

This resistance is both enabled and constrained by the formal structure of debate. Dialectic's binary oppositions are both opportunity and trap. Opportunity in that the constant back and forth of debate which cannot be evaded by either voice allows the feminine voice repeated opportunities to meet her interlocutor on equal terms. Every time she speaks, she is able to pick up on and nuance what the masculine voice has said, demonstrating her rhetorical ability in a game played, formally, on a level playing field. Having said that, the dialectic which provides space to shape the argument is a polarizing force when it comes to the creation of gender. The form forces binaries, pushing the feminine voice to conform to oppositional positions, such as Madonna versus whore or asexual, aloof and upper class *domna* versus available, carnal and *vilain* shepherdess. The challenge for these feminine voices is to capitalize on the opportunity of debate whilst resisting its polarization.

I suggest that the feminine voice's progress can be traced through the courtly lyric and the narrative texts to the parodic world of shepherdesses and the extremes of the *fabliaux*. Throughout these genres, all of which rely on an audience aware of courtly ideology for their impact, the feminine voices rely on dialogue to push the terms of the debate. Their weapon of choice through changing generic expectations remains the same: they use dialectic to take up and reshape masculine terms. This ability to meet masculine voices and preoccupations on their

---

<sup>365</sup> Shapiro, 'The Provençal Trobairitz', p. 563.

own ground and modify the implications of the terms used is demonstrated repeatedly. When it comes to genres which foreground humour, this stands out even more than it does in the more serious texts. The shepherdesses and women of the *fabliaux* are unmistakably able to use debate as a medium which turns the tables on masculine voices. The contrast between a savvy feminine voice who interjects with a clerical, analytic response which deploys an entirely unexpected knowledge of dialectic – associated with the advanced learning of the seven liberal arts – and her hapless victim, who may also be subject to physical humiliation, is the key to the humour of these texts. Feminine voices in dialogue sit at the heart of this, pushing the boundaries of the possible and creating a space in which they can sometimes articulate their desires and have them fulfilled.

Far from an apologetic voice in a straitjacket of courtly ideology, debate and dialogue gives feminine voices a medium in which they can push the boundaries, using the tools available to them. Knowledgeable and aware of the terms of the debate, these feminine voices are able to carve out space in which they resist the pressure to conform.

## Conclusion

Dialogue, then, informs the construction of the courtly subject in several ways, and across different genres. Dialogue and dialectic structure the speaking voice not just within those lyrics and narratives which use dialogue, but also within texts which do not on the face of it feature dialogue. This latter group combines monologue with dialogic structure, or evolves into dialogue, usually between anonymous elements of the poetic voice's psyche, or between the poetic voice and the personification of an external figure such as *Amors*.

The twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries are often described as the birth of the poetic subject in vernacular texts. This subject has traditionally been seen as a monologic speaking voice, a unified subject, but I suggest that dialogue is key to the construction of the poetic speaking voice, allowing it to explore the meaning of love and what it means to be a lover.

The creation of the ideal lover owes more to dialogue and dialectic than previously acknowledged. Dialogue and dialectic work in three principal ways: first, they inform debate lyrics, which use these formal devices as they consider all aspects of courtly love and the courtly lover's persona. Secondly, they provide a space in which the emerging subject can use debate to navigate unfamiliar emotions. Thirdly, they allow feminine voices to engage in courtly conversation, giving them a forum which allows them to participate in the broader courtly conversation.

Debate and dialectic shape cultural stereotypes, their form pushing interlocutors toward binary positions which are, to a certain extent, dictated by poetic structure.

They also have an impact on one of courtly love's major themes, silence and secrecy. Two or sometimes three voices considering the virtues of silence, discretion or speech, have a particular resonance which differs from a single voice tackling the same issue. Dialogue moulds this important aspect of the poetic persona, allowing silence and secrecy to become a constantly negotiated part of the courtly process, always subject to the back and forth of debate and dialectic. Debate is also vital for the medieval feminine voice, given their propensity for this form. Statistically, feminine voices favoured debate, giving debate and dialogue real pertinence when we consider the construction of the gendered voice.

Dialogue lyrics give the speaking voice a particular forum in which he or she can explore courtly love. Its formal parameters apply to each voice, giving the interlocutors a level playing field within which they can explore the question at hand. Dialectic and debate, while imposing a binary on the argument, do give a generally muted or silenced voice – in this case, the feminine voice – an opportunity to participate on something approaching equal terms, using contraries to push at the boundaries of what is defined as 'feminine'.

Debate lyrics take the tropes established in the *cansos* and *chansons* and play with them to establish the parameters for the courtly lover. This explicitly performative genre often uses humour, relying on an audience able to recognise the themes it deconstructs. The corpus of debate lyrics in Occitan and in Old French uses its oppositional form to push at the edges of each theme, exploring what is acceptable – it is the vernacular version of Abelard's dictum that in questioning we find the truth. The medieval love of debate is seen in the *tensos* and *jeux-partis*, which

provide a forum for exploration as the model of the ideal courtly lover is established, an ideal which is still with us today.

However, dialogue and dialectic does not just allow the speaking voices to establish the parameters for the good or bad lover, it also allows a space in which they can negotiate their decisions about courtly love. Dialogue and dialectic provide a forum in which the speaking voice(s) can navigate the complexities of the courtly hierarchy. This can be seen at work in different ways in lyrics and in narratives. As discussed in my chapter 'Monologue as Dialogue', voices of each gender use dialogue, and the oppositions of dialectic, to think through the tensions inherent in courtly love. Dialogue and dialectic work here as a means of analysing a position and reaching a conclusion, a very different mechanism from the more hypothetical debate about different scenarios seen in the *tensos* and *jeux-partis*. The use of dialogue and dialectic as a tool for reasoning can also be seen in narrative monologues, where it becomes a vital crutch for characters presented as naïve and inexperienced. These characters rely on dialogue and dialectic as they decide how to react to overwhelming emotion, using opposition to move toward a conclusion.

Finally, dialogue and dialectic are a vital tool for feminine voices. They allow the feminine voice a space in which she can take up masculine concepts and forms, and redefine them, using the oppositional form to do so. The entry into the courtly debate of a feminine voice is unusual in itself, and, as I suggest in the chapter 'Women's Desire', her position is constrained by the debate form. However, although the form pushes the feminine into a binary position, it nonetheless allows space for her to resist the stark polarity of feminine types offered her, even if only by degrees.

These three examples contribute to a different understanding of the lyric speaking voice, which has been viewed as part of a unified subjectivity. However, I suggest that dialogue should be seen as key to the way in which the profile of the courtly lover, which is so influential in western culture, has developed.

Vernacular poetry has used dialogue as part of its construction of love since at least the time of Sappho, who composed between c. 630 and 570 BC. Probably the earliest attributed female poet, Sappho's 'Prayer to Afroditi' uses apostrophe and rhetorical questions, which the feminine speaking voice answers herself, as she asks the goddess of love for help in her quest for happiness in love. After the twelfth-century renaissance, the paradigm of the courtly lover took off, but what I want to note is the use of dialogue. Dialogue as a form which courtly lovers continue to use can be seen in late medieval and early modern texts – Chaucer, Boccaccio and Shakespeare, for example, all use dialogue in various ways as they construct a picture of their courtly lovers.

Boccaccio, writing in the mid-fourteenth century, uses dialogue throughout *The Decameron* to shape each day's tales. The main introduction's themes are communicated via dialogue between the ladies, and are reflected in the content of the tales themselves, creating a framework of dialogue both between characters and between sections of the text. The main introduction acts as a frame for the daily stories which follow it, with Filomena's contribution to the dialogue establishing a key theme:

‘As long as I live with dignity and have no remorse of conscience about anything, let anyone who wishes say what he likes to the contrary: God and Truth will take up arms in my defense.’<sup>366</sup>

The contrast between the introduction’s emphasis on the proper way to live and die, and the first tale, about the trickster Ser Cepparello, whose life and death are hedged about with immorality and deceit, highlights an ongoing dialogue between characters, tales, and frame. A frame which uses dialogue to reinforce the narrator’s focus can also be seen in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, written in the second half of the fourteenth century. The Host sets the scene in the Prologue, suggesting that each guest tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. The terms are that they must provide ‘good morality and general pleasure’, and the agreement is conducted via suggested dialogue.<sup>367</sup> The Host’s side of the dialogue is in direct speech, and that of his audience communicated reported speech. As the tales proceed, dialogue between characters (such as the Summoner and the Friar) and between tales (those of the Miller and the Reeve, for example) reinforces the sense of the text as a coherent whole, using various forms of dialogue to guide the audience and construct the characters.

Finally, this example from Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* sees Viola ask herself why Olivia returns to her a ring she had not given – a scenario familiar to those who know the conceit of the *Lai de l’ombre*:

---

<sup>366</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, p. 17.

<sup>367</sup> Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, p. 24.



VIOLA        I left no ring with her: what means this lady?  
Fortune forbid my outside have not charm'd her!  
[...]  
None of my lord's ring? Why, he sent her none.  
I am the man! If it be so, as 'tis,  
Poor lady, she were better love a dream.     (2:2:16-17; 23-25)

Viola uses dialogic structure to explore her own feelings, and those of Olivia, exemplifying the use of dialogue and dialectic when a character is unsure which direction to take. It is a scene so similar to that of the *Lai d'ombre* considered above that it would be reasonable to assume Shakespeare knew this text in some form. Eventually she addresses time and invokes his assistance as an external arbiter who can resolve the knot:

VIOLA        O time, thou must untangle this, not I:  
It is too hard a knot for me t'untie.                     (2:2:39-40)

Dialogue and dialectic is part of the construction of love and of the lover – we have absorbed, for example, the Ovidian trope of love as a sickness, of love as something which brings both pain and pleasure – dialectic in action - and it is the oppositional nature of love, as well as the use of dialogue to explore love, which I want to point up as something we now take for granted. As I hope I have shown, its roots are there in the earliest vernacular accounts of love, and it can be traced from medieval France and Occitania all the way through to William Shakespeare, the playwright who arguably did more to confirm the figure of the lover in the consciousness of the English-speaking world than any other individual writer.

Dialogue and dialectic are not a side-show in the literary concept of love, now part of our cultural heritage: they are far more central than previously acknowledged. They order and direct lovers of each gender, and enable both the experienced and the naïve to move through an often disorienting emotional world. They afford feminine voices the opportunity to participate in the conversation, giving them the tools to push at the edges of the stereotypes which have plagued the literary figure of 'woman'. Finally, they give a complexity and a richness to the sometimes one-dimensional figure of the courtly lover as lyric subject, enabling him to move toward a multi-layered position capable of movement. Dialogue and dialectic are the backdrop against which we conceptualise courtly love – the hidden component whose centrality to our vision of courtly love should be reconsidered.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Literature

Abelard, Peter, *Sic et Non*, trans. by Priscilla Throop (Vermont: MedievalMS, 2007).

Adam le Bossu: *Le Jeu de la feuillée*, ed. by Jean Dufournet (Louvain: Peeters, 1991).

Andreas Capellanus on Love, ed. by P. G. Walsh (London: Duckworth, 1982).

Bernard de Ventadour: *chansons d'amour*, ed. by Moshé Lazar (Paris: Klincksieck, 1966).

*Biographies des troubadours*, ed. by Jean Boutière and Alexander Herman Schutz (Paris: Nizet, 1964).

Boccaccio, Giovanni, *The Decameron*, trans. Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (New York: Norton & Co, 1982).

Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill Coghill (London: Penguin, 1951).

Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, ed. by Charles Méla and Olivier Collet (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1994).

Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, ed. by Jean-Marie Fritz (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1992).

Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot ou le chevalier de la charrette*, ed. by Jean-Claude Aubailly (Paris: Flammarion, 1991).

Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. by David F. Hult (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1994).

*En Aquel Temps*, in *Nouvelles Courtoises*, -Thiolier and Marie-Françoise Notz-Grob (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1997).

*Flamenca: roman Occitan du XIIIe siècle*, ed. by Jean-Charles Huchet (Paris: Bibliothèque Médiévale, 1988).

*Les Poèmes de Gaucelm Faidit: Troubadour du XIIe siècle*, ed. by Jean Mouzat (Paris: Nizet, 1965).

*The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Ruth Verity Sharman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Gui d'Ussel: *Les Poésies des quatre troubadours d'Ussel*, ed. by Jean Audiau (Paris, 1922).

Guilhem IX: *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine*, ed. by Gerald A. Bond (New York: Garland, 1982).

*Jaufre*, ed. by Clovis Brunel, 2 vols., (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1943).

Jean Renart, *Lai de l'ombre*, in *Nouvelles Courtoises Occitanes et Françaises*,  
-Thiolier and Marie-Françoise Notz-Grob (Paris: Lettres  
Gothiques, 1997).

Jean Renart, *Le Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, ed. by Regina Psaki  
(New York: Garland, 1995).

*La Chasteleine de Vergy*, in *Nouvelles Courtoises*, -Thiolier  
and Marie-Françoise Notz-Grob (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1997).

*Lais de Marie de France*, ed. by Laurence Harf-Lancner and Karl Warnke (Paris:  
Lettres Gothiques, 1990).

*Le Roman d'Enéas*, ed. by Aimé Petit (Paris: Lettres Gothiques, 1997).

*Marcabru: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Simon Gaunt, Ruth Harvey, and Linda Paterson  
(Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000).

*Narcisus et Dané*, ed. by Penny Eley (Liverpool: Liverpool Online Series, 2002).

*Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico Van Den  
Boogaard, 10 vols. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1983-1996).

*The Poems of the Troubadour Peire Rogier*, ed. by Derek E. T. Nicholson  
(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976).

*Poèmes d'amour des XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, ed. by Emmanuèle Baumgartner and  
Françoise Ferrand (Paris: Bibliothèque Médiévale, 1983).

*The Poems of the Troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras*, ed. by Joseph Linskill (The  
Hague: Mouton, 1964).

*The Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut d'Orange*, ed. by Walter T.  
Pattison (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952).

*Recueil général des jeux-partis français*, ed. by Arthur Långfors, 2 vols (Paris:  
Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1926).

*The Complete Poems of Sappho*, trans. Willis Barnstone (Boston: Shambhala,  
2009).

*Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. by Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East  
Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1992).

*Songs of the Women Trouvères*, ed. by Eglal Doss-Quinby, and others (New  
Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

*The Medieval Pastourelle*, ed. by William D. Paden, 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1987).

*Trobairitz: Songs of the Women Troubadours*, ed. by Matilda Bruckner, Laurie Shepard, and Sarah White (New York; London: Garland, 2000).

*Trobairitz: Der Beitrag der Frau in der altokzitanischen höfischen Lyrik: Edition des Gesamtkorpus*, ed. by Angelica Rieger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991).

*The Troubadour Tensos and Partimens: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Ruth Harvey and Linda Paterson, 3 vols (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010).

William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. by Roma Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

## **Secondary Literature**

Adams, Tracy, *Violent Passions: Managing Love in the Old French Verse Romance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Agamben, Giorgio, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

Akehurst, F. R. P., 'Customary Law in the Old French Fabliau', in *The Old French Fabliaux: Essays on Comedy and Context*, ed. by Kristin L. Burr, John F. Moran and Norris J. Lacy (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2007), pp. 42-54.

Allen, Peter L., 'The Ambiguity of Silence: Gender, Writing, and *Le Roman de Silence*', in *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature*, ed. by Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), pp. 98-112.

Armstrong, Adrian, and Kay, Sarah, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the Rose to the Rhétoriciens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Aubrey, Elizabeth, 'The Dialectic Between Occitania and France in the Thirteenth Century', *Early Music History*, 16 (1997), 1-53.

Baldwin, John W., *The Scholastic Culture of the Middle Ages, 1000-1300* (Lexington: Heath, 1971).

Barry McCann Boulton, Maureen, 'Lyric Insertions and the Reversal of Romance Conventions in Jean Renart's *Roman de la rose* or *Guillaume de Dole*', in *Jean Renart and the Art of Romance: Essays on Guillaume de Dole*, ed. by Nancy Vine Durling (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), pp. 85-104.

Bec, Pierre, 'L'Antithèse poétique chez Bernard de Ventadour', in *Mélanges de philologie romane dédiés à Jean Boutière*, François Pirot, 2 vols (Liège: Solidi, 1971), I, pp. 107-37.

Bec, Pierre, 'A propos de deux *partimens* bilingues. *Tenson* réelle ou *tenson* fictive?', in *Sempre /*



Xavier Ravier, ed. by Jean-Claude Bouvier, Jacques Gourc et Franc

- (Le Mirail, 2003), pp. 413-28.

Bec, Pierre, “‘Trobairitz’ et chansons de femme. Contribution à la connaissance du lyrisme féminin au moyen âge’, *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 22 (1979), 235-62.

Bédier, Joseph, ‘Les Chansons du comte de Bretagne’, in *Mélanges de linguistique et de littérature offerts à M. Alfred Jeanroy par ses élèves et ses amis* (Paris: Droz, 1928), pp. 477-95.

Benton, John F., ‘The Court of Champagne as Literary Center’, *Speculum* 36 (1961), 551-91.

Berger, Anne-Emmanuelle, ‘Dernières nouvelles d’Écho’, *Littérature*, 102 (1996), 71-90.

Berger, Roger, *Littérature et société arrageoise au XIIIe siècle: Les chansons et les dits artésiens* (Arras: Commission Départementale des Monuments Historiques du Pas-de-Calais, 1981).

Biernoff, Suzannah, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

Blackburn, Simon, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Bloch, Howard R., *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

Bloch, Howard R., 'Money, Metaphor, and the Mediation of Social Difference in Old French Romance', *Symposium*, 35 (1981), 18-33.

Bloch, Howard R., "The Fabliaux, Fetishism, and Freud's Jewish Jokes', *Representations*, 4 (1983), 1-26.

Bloch, Howard R., *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

Bloch, Howard R., 'Silence and Holes: The *Roman de Silence* and the art of the Trouvère, *Yale French Studies*, 70 (1986), 81-99.

Bloch, Howard R., *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Bloch, Howard R., *The Anonymous Marie de France* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate, *Reading Myth: Classical Mythology and its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

Brahney, Kathleen J., 'When *Silence* Was Golden: Female Personae in the *Roman de Silence*', in *The Spirit of the Court: Selected Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society* (Toronto 1983), ed. by Glyn S. Burgess and Robert A. Taylor (Toronto: Boydell & Brewer, 1985), pp. 52-61.

Brightenback, Kristine, 'The *Metamorphoses* and Narrative *Conjointure* in "Deus Amanz," "Yonec," and "Le Laüstic"', *Romanic Review*, 72 (1981), 1-12.

Brown, Katherine A., "'Bérenger au long cul" and the *pastourelle*', *Romance Notes*, 47 (2007), 323-31.

Bruckner, Matilda Tomaryn, 'Fictions of the Female Voice: The Women Troubadours', *Speculum*, 67 (1992), 865-91.

Bruckner, Matilda Tomaryn, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

Bruckner, Matilda Tomaryn, 'Debatable Fictions: The *Tensos* of the *Trobairitz*', in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture: Selected Papers from the Seventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society*, University of

*Massachusetts, Amherst, USA, 27 July - 1 August 1992*, ed. by Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1994), pp. 19-28.

Bruckner, Matilda Tomaryn, 'Redefining the Center: Verse and Prose *Charrette*', in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. by Carol Dover (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), pp. 95-105.

Bullock-Davies, Constance, 'Lanval and Avalon', *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 23 (1969), 128-42.

Burgess, Glyn S., ' "Narcisse: conte ovidien français du XIIe siècle," ed. Martine Thiry-Stassin and Madeleine Tyssens', *Romance Philology*, 33 (1980), 593-95.

Burgess, Glyn S., 'Chivalry and Prowess in the *Lais* of Marie de France', *French Studies*, 37 (1983), 129-42.

Burgess, Glyn S., *The Lais of Marie de France: Text and Context* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

Burns, E. Jane, 'The Man Behind the Lady in Troubadour Lyric', *Romance Notes*, 25 (1985), 254-70.

Burns, E. Jane, 'Knowing Women: Female Orifices in Old French Farce and Fabliau', *Exemplaria*, 4 (1992), 81-104.

Burns, E. Jane, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

Burns, E. Jane and others, 'Feminism and the Discipline of Old French Studies: *Une Bele Disjointure*', in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. by R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 225-68.

Burns, E. Jane, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

Busby, Keith, 'Fabliau et Roman Breton: Le cas de Berengier au Long Cul', in *Cahiers d'Études Médiévales: épopée animale, fable, fabliau*, ed. by Gabriel Bianciotto and Michel Salvat (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), pp. 121-31.

Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990).

Butterfield, Ardis, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Cholakian, Rouben C., *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

Clark, Robert L. A., 'Queering Gender and Naturalizing Class in the *Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana*, 12 (2002), 50-63.

Cline, Ruth H., 'Heart and Eyes', *Romance Philology*, 25 (1972), 263-97.

Chambers, Frank M., '*Las trobairitz soiseubudas*', in *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours*, ed. by William D. Paden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 45-60.

Clifford, Paula, *Marie de France: Lais* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1982).

Cooke, Thomas D., *The Old French and Chaucerian Fabliaux: A Study of Their Comic Climax* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978).

Cowling, Samuel T., 'The Image of the Tournament in Marie de France's *Le Chaitivel*', *Romance Notes*, 16 (1974-75), 686-91.

Damon, S. Foster, 'Marie de France: Psychologist of Courtly Love', *PMLA*, 44 (1929), 968-96.

Damon, Phillip, 'Courtesy and Comedy in "Le Roman de Flamenca"', *Romance Philology*, 17 (1964), 608-15.

Dell, Helen, *Desire by Gender and Genre in Trouvère Song* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2008).

Delmaire, Bernard, *Le Diocese d'Arras de 1093 au milieu de XIVe siècle: recherches sur la vie religieuse dans le nord de la France au moyen age*,  
-de-Calais,  
1994).

Dembowski, Peter F., 'Vocabulary of Old French Courtly Lyrics – Difficulties and Hidden Difficulties', *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (1976), 763-79.

Denoyelle, Corinne, *Poétique du dialogue médiéval* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

Dentith, Simon, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Doss-Quinby, Eglal, 'Rolan, de ceu ke m'avez / parti dirai mon samblant: The Feminine Voice in the Old French *jeu-parti*', *Neophilologus*, 83 (1999), 497-516.

Dragonetti, Roger, *La Technique poétique des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise* (Bruges: de Tempel, 1960).

Dronke, Peter, 'The Rise of the Medieval Fabliau: Latin and Vernacular Evidence', *Romanische Forschungen*, 85 (1973), 275-97.

Dronke, Peter, 'The Provençal *Trobairitz*: Castelloza', in *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. by Katharina M. Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 131-52.

Duby, Georges, 'Dans la France du Nord-Ouest au XIIe siècle: les «jeunes» dans la société aristocratique', *Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 5 (1964), 835-46.

Enders, Jody, 'Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien's *Cligès*', *Rhetorica*, 10 (1992), 5-23.

Fantazzi, Charles, 'Marcabru's *Pastourelle*: Courtly Love Decoded', *Studies in Philology*, 71 (1974), 385-403.

Felman, Shoshana, 'Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy', *Diacritics*, 5 (1975), 2-10.

Ferguson, Mary, 'Folklore in the *Lais* of Marie de France', *Romanic Review*, 57 (1966), 3-24.

Ferrante, Joan M., 'The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy', in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. by Patricia H. Labalme (New York; London: New York University Press, 1984), pp. 9-42.

Ferrante, Joan M., 'Notes Toward the Study of a Female Rhetoric in the *Trobairitz*', in *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours*, ed. by William D. Paden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 63-72.



Fleischman, Suzanne, 'Dialectic Structures in *Flamenca*', *Romanische Forschungen*, 92 (1980), 223-46.

Fleischman, Suzanne, '"Jaufre" or Chivalry Askew: Social Overtones of Parody in Arthurian Romance', *Viator*, 12 (1981), 101-29.

Fraser, Veronica, 'Humour and Satire in the Romance of "Jaufre"', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 31 (1995), 223-33.

Freeman, Michelle A., *The Poetics of Translatio Studii and Conjointure: Chrétien de Troyes's Cligès* (Lexington: French Forum, 1979).

Freeman, Michelle A., 'Marie de France's Poetics of Silence: The Implications for a Feminine Translatio', *PMLA*, 99 (1984), 860-83.

Freeman, Michelle A., 'The Changing Figure of the Male: The Revenge of the Female Storyteller', in *In Quest of Marie de France: A Twelfth-Century Poet*, ed. by Chantal A. Maréchal (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 243-61.

Gally, Michèle, 'Jehan Bretel, poète et mécène', in *Figures de l'écrivain au moyen age: actes du Colloque du Centre d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie (Amiens 18-20 mars 1988)*, ed. by Danielle Buschinger (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1991), pp. 125-38.

Gally, Michèle, 'Entre sens et non sens: approches comparatives de la *tenso* d'oc et du *jeu-parti* Arrageois', in *Il Genere « tenzone » nelle letterature romanze delle*

*Origini*, ed. by Matteo Pedroni and Antonio Stäuble (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1999), pp. 223-35.

Gally, Michèle, *Parler d'amour au puy d'Arras: lyrique en jeu* (Orléans: Paradigme, 2004).

Gaunt, Simon, 'Sexual Difference and the Metaphor of Language in a Troubadour Poem', *Modern Language Review*, 83 (1988), 297-313.

Gaunt, Simon, *Troubadours and Irony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Gaunt, Simon, 'The Significance of Silence', *Paragraph*, 13 (1990), 202-16.

Gaunt, Simon, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Gaunt, Simon, and Kay, Sarah, eds., *The Troubadours: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Gaunt, Simon, *Retelling the Tale: An Introduction to Medieval French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2001).

Gaunt, Simon, *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature: Martyrs to Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Gilbert, Jane, '“I am not he”: Narcissus and Ironic Performativity in Medieval French Literature', *Modern Language Review*, 100 (2005), 940-53.

Goldin, Frederick, *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

Gravdal, Kathryn, 'Camouflaging Rape: The Rhetoric of Sexual Violence in the Medieval Pastourelle', *Romanic Review*, 76 (1985), 361-73.

Gravdal, Kathryn, *Vilain and Courtois: Transgressive Parody in French Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

Gravdal, Kathryn, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

Gravdal, Kathryn, 'Mimicry, Metonymy, and “Women’s Song”: the Medieval Women Trobairitz', *Romanic Review*, 83 (1992), 411-26.

Gravdal, Kathryn, 'Chrétien de Troyes, Gratian, and the Medieval Romance of Sexual Violence', *Signs*, 17 (1992), 558-85.

Green, D. H., 'Irony and the Medieval Romance', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 6 (1970), 49-64.

Griffin, Miranda, 'Gender and Authority in the Medieval French Lai', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 35 (1999), 42-56.

Griffin, Miranda, 'Echo, Voice and Citation in *Le Lai de Narcisse* and *Cristal et Clarie*', *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales et Humanistes*, 22 (2011), 59-74.

Grimbert, Joan Tasker, 'Cligès and the Chansons: A Slave to Love' in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), pp. 120-36.

Guyer, Foster E., 'The Influence of Ovid on Crestien de Troyes', *Romanic Review*, 12 (1921), 97-134; 216-47.

Haidu, Peter, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes: Irony and Comedy in Cligès and Perceval* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1968).

Hamesse, Jacqueline, 'The Scholastic Model of Reading', in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier; trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 103-19.

Harf, Laurence, 'La reine ou la fée: L'itinéraire du héros dans les *lais* de Marie de France', in *Amour et merveille: Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed by Jean Dufournet (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995), pp. 81-108.

Harvey, Ruth, 'The Satirical Use of the Courtly Expression 'Si Dons' in the Works of the Troubadour Marcabru', *Modern Language Review*, 78 (1983), 24-33.

Harvey, Ruth, 'Courtly Culture in medieval Occitania', in *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, ed. by Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 8-27.

Hoepffner, Ernest, 'Pour la chronologie des *Lais* de Marie de France', *Romania*, 59 (1933), pp. 351-70; *Romania*, 60 (1934), 36-66.

Honeycutt, Benjamin L., 'The Knight and his World as Instruments of Humor in the Fabliaux', in *The Humor of the Fabliaux: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Thomas D. Cooke and Benjamin L. Honeycutt (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), pp. 75-92.

Huchet, Jean-Charles, *L'Amour discourtois: La "Fin'Amors" chez les premiers troubadours* (Toulouse: Editions Privat, 1987).

Huchet, Jean-Charles, 'Le Roman à nu: *Jaufré*', *Littérature*, 74 (1989), 91-99.

Huchet, Jean-Charles, '*Jaufré* et *Flamenca*: Novas ou romans?', *Revue des Langues Romanes*, 96 (1992), 275-300.

Hult, David F., *Manuscript Transmission, Reception and Canon Formation: The Case of Chrétien de Troyes* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998).

Hunt, Tony, 'The Dialectic of *Yvain*', *Modern Language Review*, 72 (1977), 285-99.

Hunt, Tony, 'Aristotle, Dialectic and Courtly Literature', *Viator*, 10 (1979), 95-129.

Hunt, Tony, *Chrétien de Troyes: Yvain* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1986).

Huot, Sylvia, *From Song to Book: the Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1987).

Huot, Sylvia, *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet: The Sacred and the Profane in Thirteenth-Century Polyphony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

Illingworth, R. N., 'La Chronologie des *Lais* de Marie de France', *Romania*, 87 (1966), 433-75.

Jackson, W. T. H., 'The Medieval Pastourelle as a Satirical Genre', *Philological Quarterly*, 31 (1952), 156-70.

Jackson, W. T. H., 'The Arthuricity of Marie de France', *Romanic Review*, 10 (1979), 1-18.

Jeanroy, Alfred, *La Poésie lyrique des troubadours*, 2 vols. (Toulouse: Privat, and Paris: Didier, 1934).

Jewers, Caroline A., *Chivalric Fiction and the History of the Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

Johnson, Lesley, 'Women on Top: Antifeminism in the Fabliaux?', *Modern Language Review*, 78 (1983), 298-307.

Jost, Jean E., 'The Non-Conformist Fabliau Genre and Its Transgressions: A Bakhtinian Analysis of Two Old French Fabliaux', in *The Old French Fabliaux: Essays on Comedy and Context*, ed. by Kristin L. Burr, John F. Moran and Norris J. Lacy (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2008), pp. 120-33.

Kay, Sarah, 'The Contrasting Use of Time in the Romances of «Jaufre» and «Flamenca»', *Medioevo Romanzo*, 4 (1979), 37-62.

Kay, Sarah, 'Two Readings of the *Lai de l'ombre*', *Modern Language Review*, 75 (1980), 515-27.

Kay, Sarah, 'Love in a Mirror: An Aspect of the Imagery of Bernart de Ventadorn', *Medium Aevum*, 52 (1983), 272-85.

Kay, Sarah, 'Derivation, Derived Rhyme, and the Trobairitz', in *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours*, ed. by William D. Paden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 157-82.

Kay, Sarah, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Kay, Sarah, *The Romance of the Rose* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1995).

Kay, Sarah, 'Courts, Clerks, and Courtly Love', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Robert Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.81-96.

Kay, Sarah, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

Kelly, Douglas, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

Kelly, Douglas, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

Kelly, Douglas, 'Narrative Poetics: Rhetoric, Orality and Performance', in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), pp. 52-63.

Kendrick, Laura, *The Game of Love: Troubadour Wordplay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Kibler, William W, Zinn, Grover A, and Earp, Lawrence. eds., *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia* (New York; London: Garland, 1995).

Kinoshita, Sharon, 'Heldris de Cornuälle's Roman de Silence and the Feudal Politics of Lineage', *PMLA*, 110 (1995), 397-409.



Kinoshita, Sharon, 'Male-Order Brides: Marriage, Patriarchy, and Monarchy in the *Roman de Silence*', *Arthuriana*, 12 (2002), 64-75.

Kostoroski, Emilie P., 'Quest in Query and the *Chastelaine de Vergi*', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 3 (1972), 179-98.

Krueger, Roberta L., *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Lacy, Norris J., 'Types of Esthetic Distances in the Fabliaux', in *The Humor of the Fabliaux: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Thomas D. Cooke and Benjamin L. Honeycutt (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), pp. 107-17.

Lacy, Norris J. 'Fabliau Women', *Romance Notes*, 25 (1985), 318-27.

Langlois, Ernest, ed., *Adam le bossu: trouvère artésien du XIIIe siècle: Le jeu de la feuillée et le jeu de Robin et Marion* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1978).

Lanham, Richard A., *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

Lazar, Moshé, *Amour courtois et "fin'amors" dans la littérature du XIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964).

Lefay-Toury, Marie-Noëlle, *La tentation du suicide dans le roman français du XIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1979).

Maddox, Donald, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Makdisi, George, 'The Scholastic Method in Medieval Education: An Inquiry into Its Origins in Law and Theology', *Speculum*, 49 (1974), 640-61.

Marenbon, John, *Early Medieval Philosophy: An Introduction (480 – 1150)* (London: Routledge, 1983).

Marenbon, John, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150-1350): An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1987).

Marenbon, John, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Marenbon, John, *Aristotelian Logic, Platonism and the Context of Early Medieval Philosophy in the West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

Martin, June Hall, *Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover* (London: Tamesis, 1972).

Mason Cooper, Kate, 'Elle and L: Sexualised Textuality in *Le Roman de Silence*', *Romance Notes*, 25 (1985), 341-60.

McCracken, Peggy, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

Ménard, Philippe, *Les Lais de Marie de France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979).

Meneghetti, Maria Luisa, *Il Pubblico dei trovatori: La ricezione della poesia cortese fino al XIV secolo* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1992).

Mickel, Emanuel J., 'A Reconsideration of the *Lais* of Marie de France', *Speculum*, 46 (1971), 39-65.

Mickel, Emanuel J, Jr., 'Antiquities in Marie's *Lais*', in *In Quest of Marie de France: A Twelfth-Century Poet*, ed. by Chantal A. Maréchal (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 123-37.

Miller, D. A., *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Minio-Paluello, Lorenzo, 'The Text of Aristotle's *Topics* and *Elenchi*: The Latin Tradition', *The Classical Quarterly*, 5 (1955), 108-18.

Morris, Colin, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050-1200* (London: SPCK, 1972).

Mühlethaler, Jean-Claude, 'Disputer de mariage: débat et subjectivité: des *jeux-partis* d'Arras à l'échange de ballades et de rondeaux chez Eustache Deschamps et Charles d'Orléans', in *Il Genere « Tenzzone » nelle letterature romanze delle Origini*, ed. by Matteo Pedroni and Antonio Stäuble (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1999), pp. 203-21.

Murphy, James J., *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

Muscatine, Charles, *Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

Muscatine, Charles, *The Old French Fabliaux* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

Nelli, René, *L'Érotique des troubadours* (Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1963).

Nouvet, Claire, 'An Impossible Response: The Disaster of Narcissus', *Yale French Studies*, 79 (1991), 103-34.

Nykrog, Per, *Les Fabliaux: Etude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médiévale* (Geneva: Droz, 1957).

Nykrog, Per, *Les Fabliaux: Nouvelle édition* (Geneva: Droz, 1973).

Nykrog, Per, 'Courtliness and the Townspeople: The Fabliaux as a Courtly Burlesque', in *The Humor of the Fabliaux: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Thomas D. Cooke and Benjamin L. Honeycutt (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), pp.59-73.

Paden, William D. et al., 'The Poems of the *Trobairitz* Na Castelloza', *Romance Philology*, 35 (1981), 158-82.

Paden, William D., ed., *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

Paden, William D., 'Rape in the Pastourelle', *Romantic Review*, 80 (1989), 331-49.

Paschal, Mary, 'The Structure of the Roman d'Enéas', *The French Review*, 54 (1980), 47-51.

Paterson, Linda M., *Troubadours and Eloquence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

Paterson, Linda, *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society, c. 1100 - c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Pearcy, Roy J., 'An Instance of Heroic Parody in the Fabliaux', *Romania*, 98 (1977), 105-8.

Perret, Michèle, 'Travesties et Transsexuelles: Yde, Silence, Grisandole, Blanchandine', *Romance Notes*, 25 (1985), 328-40.

Pillet, Alfred, and Carstens, Henry, eds., *Bibliographie der Troubadours* (Halle (Saale): Niemeyer, 1933).

Polak, Lucie, 'Two Lines From Marie de France's *Laüstic*', *French Studies*, 34 (1980), 257-58.

Polak, Lucie, *Chrétien de Troyes: Cligès* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1982).

Psaki, Regina, 'Jean Renart's Expanded Text: Liënor and the Lyrics of *Guillaume de Dole*', in *Jean Renart and the Art of Romance: Essays on Guillaume de Dole*, ed. by Nancy Vine Durling (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), pp.122-41.

Rose, Margaret A., *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

De Rijk, L.M., 'Some New Evidence on Twelfth Century Logic: Alberic and the School of Mont Ste Geneviève (Montani)', *Vivarium*, 4 (1966), 1-57.

Salverda de Grave, J. J., *Observations sur l'art lyrique de Giraut de Borneil* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1938).

Sankovitch, Tilde, 'The Romance of Flamenca: The Puppeteer and the Play', *Neophilologus*, 60 (1976), 8-19.

Sankovitch, Tilde, 'Lombarda's Reluctant Mirror: Speculum of Another Poet', in *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours*, ed. by William D. Paden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp.183-93.

De Saussure, Ferdinand, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. by Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Reidlinger, trans. by Wade Baskin (Glasgow: Fontana-Collins, 1974).

Schmolke-Hasselmann, Beate, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance: The Verse Tradition*, trans. by Margaret and Roger Middleton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Shahar, Shulamith, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Chaya Galai (London: Methuen, 1983).

Shapiro, Marianne, 'The Provençal *Trobairitz* and the Limits of Courtly Love', *Signs*, 3 (1978), 560-71.

Shedd, Gordon M., "'Flamenca': A Medieval Satire on Courtly Love", *The Chaucer Review*, 2 (1967), 43-65.

Showalter, Elaine, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. by Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 9-35.

Siskin, H. Jay and Storme, Julie A., 'Suffering Love: The Reversed Order in the Poetry of Na Castelloza', in *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours*, ed. by William D. Paden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp.113-27.

Spearing, A.C., *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Spence, Sarah, 'Double Vision: Love and Envy in the *Lais*', in *In Quest of Marie de France: A Twelfth-Century Poet*, ed. by Chantal A. Maréchal (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 262-79.

Spence, Sarah, "'Lo Cop Mortal": The Evil Eye and the Origins of Courtly Love', *Romanic Review*, 87 (1996), 307-18.

Spence, Sarah, *Texts and the Self in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Echo', *New Literary History*, 24 (1993), 17-43.

Stock, Brian, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

Storme, Julie A., 'Suggested Dialogue in the Poetry of Giraut de Bornelh: The Conversations of the Heart', *Neophilologus*, 68 (1984), 340-54.



Stump, Eleanore, 'Dialectic', in *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, ed. by David L. Wagner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 125-46.

Sturges, Robert S., 'The Crossdresser and the *Juventus*: Category Crisis in *Silence*', *Arthuriana*, 12 (2002), 37-49.

Suchier, Hermann, *Denkmäler provenzalischer Literatur und Sprache* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1883).

Swanson, R. N., *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

Switten, Margaret L., *Music and Poetry in the Middle Ages: A Guide to Research on French and Occitan Song, 1100-1400* (New York: Garland, 1995).

Symes, Carol, *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

Tasker Grimberty, Joan, "*Yvain*" dans le *miroir* : une poétique de la réflexion dans le Chevalier au lion de Chrétien de Troyes (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1988).

Tasker Grimberty, Joan, 'Cligès and the Chansons', in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimberty (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), pp. 120-36.

Topsfield, Leslie, 'Intention and Ideas in "Flamenca"', *Medium Aevum*, 36 (1967), 119-33.

Topsfield, Leslie, *Troubadours and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

Topsfield, Leslie, *Chrétien de Troyes: A Study of the Arthurian Romances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Tyssens, Madeleine, 'Voix de femmes dans la lyrique d'oïl', in *Femmes-mariages-lignages XIIe – XIVe siècles: mélanges offerts à Georges Duby* (Brussels: De Boeck, 1992), pp.373-88.

Van Vleck, Amelia, "'Tost me trobaretz fenida": Reciprocating Composition in the Songs of Castelloza', in *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours*, ed. by William D. Paden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 95-111.

Van Vleck, Amelia, *Memory and Re-Creation in Troubadour Lyric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

Vance, Eugene, 'Chrétien's Yvain and the Ideologies of Change and Exchange', *Yale French Studies*, 70 (1986), 42-62.

Vance, Eugene, *From Topic to Tale: Logic and Narrativity in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Vernay, Philippe, '*Jehan, d'amour je vous deman : quelques considérations sur le jeu-parti français*', in *Il Genere « Tenzzone » nelle letterature romanze delle Origini*, ed. by Matteo Pedroni and Antonio Stäuble (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1999), pp. 189-201.

Vinaver, Eugene, *A la recherche d'une poétique médiévale* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1970).

Wagner, David, 'The Seven Classical Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship', in *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, ed. by David L. Wagner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 1-31.

Whalen, Logan E., *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

White, Sarah Melhado, 'Sexual Language and Human Conflict in Old French Fabliaux', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24 (1982), 185-210.

Zink, Michel, 'Suspension and Fall: The Fragmentation and Linkage of Lyric Insertions in *Le roman de la rose* (Guillaume de Dole) and *Le roman de la violette*', in *Jean Renart and the Art of Romance: Essays on Guillaume de Dole*, ed. by Nancy Vine Durling (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), pp. 105-21.

Zumthor, Paul, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972).

